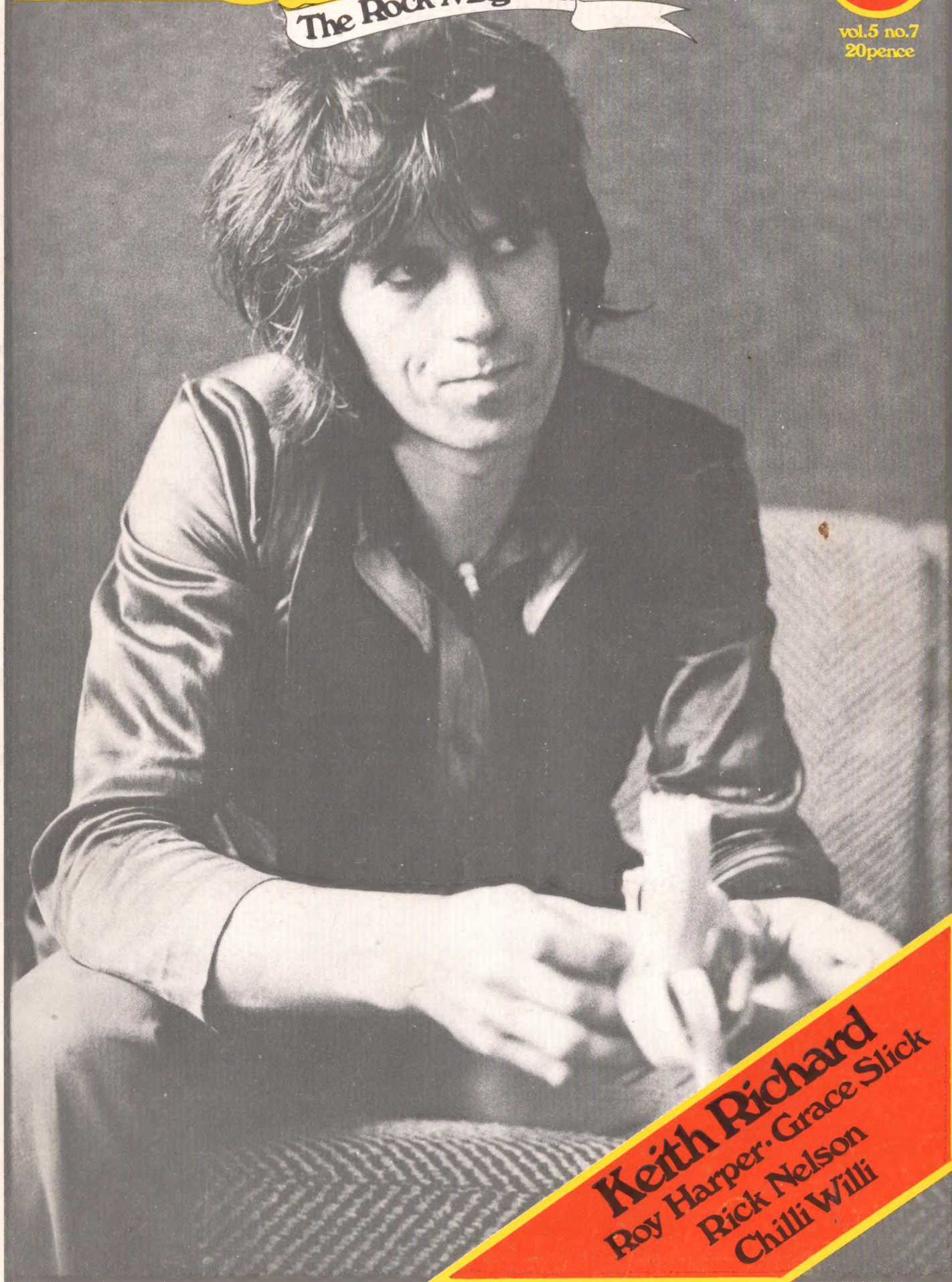


ZIGZAG

The Rock Magazine

47

vol.5 no.7
20pence



Keith Richards
Roy Harper • Grace Slick
Rick Nelson
Chilli Willi

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November 1974

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QUAD ARGENT

Argent, currently in the studios working on their forthcoming album, take to the road later this month for their first British tour since last February. Seems like it's going to be quite an interesting start for the new-look band too, as the whole tour will feature a unique sound system now being built for them by Rotary Speaker Developments. "As far as we can work out," explained Rod Argent, "the only band to use real quad before has been the Floyd. There's a lot of bands that have said they've used quad but it's been more sort of double stereo really, but this is a true 360 degree quad system." Since the rear two speaker columns will be situated downstairs beneath the gallery, two types of ticket will be on sale—quad for seats in the stalls and stereo for those in the circle.

The tour will also mark Argent's debut as a quintet (their new vocalist should be announced by the time you read this), but the album, meanwhile, is being recorded as a four-piece with guitarist John Grimaldi as replacement for Russ Ballard, who left the band earlier this year. Without wanting to give too much away at this stage Rod explained briefly what lines the album will follow. "It's a concept album in as much as that most of the themes of the songs have got a basic jumping-off point, and the imagery in all the songs is concerned with one particular theme, although it's not only and specifically related to that theme—it's got much wider connotations. As far as the actual music is concerned, I think the album is very flowing, there's a lot of interplay between harmonies, mellotron, moog and guitar." Most of the material on the album will be written by Rod and he will be co-producing, as usual, with Chris White. On tour Argent will be performing material from both this and previous albums.

Speaking of the effect on Argent's music of Russ Ballard's departure, Rod said, "The music is much more unified now because when Russell was in the band we had two specific directions, both of which were in a way compromises in themselves. Now at least we're going one way and I think the new album will be really unified because we're thinking about everything in the same way." This view was echoed by John Grimaldi: "Without Russ now, Rod finds it easier to go in the one direction he wants, that is to arrange as he wants, and thus the finished thing is still very specifically Argent, but it's so much more mature."

Argent's quad tour opens at Bourne-mouth Winter Gardens on November 22, continuing Oxford New Theatre (23), Wolverhampton Civic Hall (24), Barry Memorial Hall (25), Dundee Caird Hall (28), Glasgow Apollo (29), Edinburgh Caley Cinema (December 1), Newcastle City Hall (2), Manchester Hardrock (3), Cheltenham Town Hall (5), London Rain-

bow (6), Bristol Colston Hall (8), Preston Guildhall (9), Sheffield City Hall (10), Liverpool Stadium (11), Swansea Brangwyn Hall (12), Plymouth Guildhall (13), Birmingham Town Hall (20), and St Albans City Hall (21).

Before the tour a double live album entitled "Encore" will be released by Epic at budget price. The set features the old line-up with Russ Ballard and was recorded at the beginning of this year at concerts in St Albans, Swansea and London's Drury Lane Theatre.

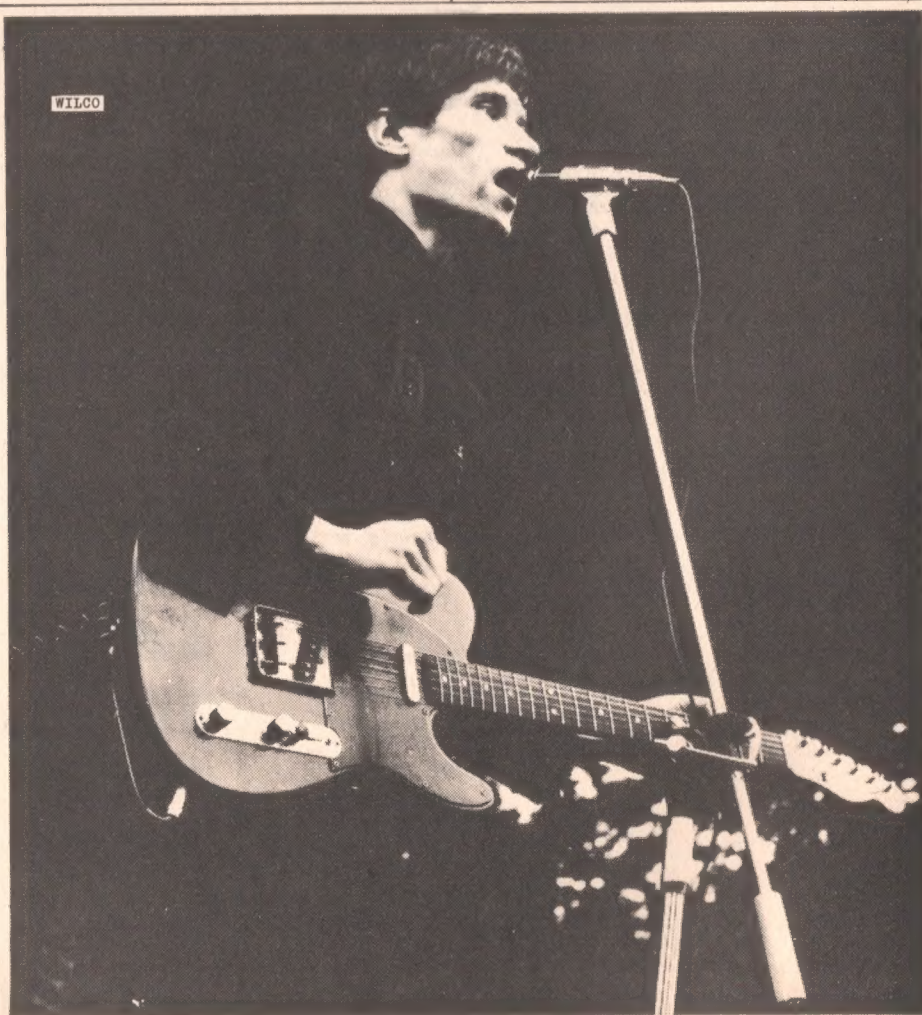
□ TREVOR GARDINER

GOOD OLD ROCK 'N' ROLL

All you ZigZaggers reared on ugly, loud, violent, dirty rock'n'roll will doubtless feel deprived and dispirited at the chronic lack of such music being made today. One comparatively new band who are blowing away the cobwebs in no uncertain manner are Dr Feelgood, who you should definitely go and see at the earliest opportunity. Their choice of standard material and their original compositions are as hard and excit-

ing a brand of rock'n'roll as you'll find anywhere, and the sight of Wilco, lead guitarist and natural STAR, staring zombie-like at a space somewhere between the audience's heads and the ceiling, tearing out vicious stuttering chords from his telecaster is one of the inspired images in rock'n'roll today. Andrew Lauder, A&R man and one of the truly good people in this business, has Dr Feelgood signed to United Artists which means we're in for a healthy slice of raw, chunky music on vinyl quite soon. Wahoo!

Another source of sustenance for you starved rockers concerns a band who I consider to be one of the finest I've ever seen... the legendary Flamin' Groovies. You can read all about their early history in one of Pete's famous articles in ZigZag 25, but some considerable amount of water has passed under the bridge since then, and the Groovies I fear are no longer working together as a band. Their whole career has been consistently dogged by such traumas and mishaps so conceivably they may rise again and carry on the tradition that has made them a cult legend and the target for a million filthy, disgraceful and sordid accusations (some true, some not quite true). However, slowly but surely their



limited amount of recorded work is finding its way onto disc and is available to those who wish to seek it out. Briefly, to bring Pete's article up to date, what's happened is this... Due (yet again) to the courage and conviction of Andrew Lauder, the Flamin' Groovies were signed to UA in this country and came over to live here. They did a number of recording sessions down at Rockfield under the supervision of Dave Edmunds where some seven tracks in all were completed. From these, two excellent singles were compiled—"Slow Death"/"Tallahassee Lassie" (UP 35392) and "Married Woman"/"Get A Shot Of Rhythm And Blues" (UP 35464), but before they had time to complete an album (which already had a tentative title—"A Bucketful Of Brains"), they disappeared back to the States under mysterious and suspicious circumstances. Ever since, they've been without a record deal and nothing's been heard of them. Until recently that is, when I came across a single on the Skydog label (a perfectly legitimate enterprise) called "Alive Forever! (more grease)" (SG FGG-002). On the A-side is a 5 minute 22 second 'live' version of "Jumpin' Jack Flash" and it's backed by a Cyril Jordan/Chris Wilson (lead guitarist and lead singer respectively) composition called "Blues From Philly's". Recorded a fair time ago in San Francisco it's apparently being released with the Groovies' consent, and having seen them myself I know it's a pretty good indication of their capabilities onstage... dense, exciting, powerful rock'n'roll—just the sort of thing we all need in our dull, everyday, humdrum lives. Also available is an EP on the same label called "Grease" (SG FGG-001) which contains 'live' versions of "Let Me Rock", "Dog Meat", "Slow Death", and "Sweet Little Rock'n'Roller". Classic stuff, and well worth the trouble to investigate. Write to The Flamin' Groovies Fanclub, 58 Rue Des Lombards, Paris 75001, France, for more details. As for those three other UA tracks, they're "You Tore Me Down", "Shake Some Action", and "Little Queenie", and the chances are they'll all eventually see the light of day in one form or another. You can also be sure I'll let you know when.

□ ANDY

KILBURNS: A SINGLE

By the time you read this your local music emporium should be stocking 'Rough Kids' the first, and for many of us, long-awaited recording from the remarkable Kilburn & The High Roads. It's been a long time coming and there were quite a few bumps in the asphalt so let's go back to the beginning...

The original Kilburns were assembled by Ian Drury, an art teacher and painter who, at the ripe young age of 29 decided he'd like to have a bash at being a rock'n'roll singer. This was late 1970 and Ian was teaching in Canterbury at the time and the original Kilburns were a mixture of friends and students. The band went through the usual motions for the next couple of years: changes of line-up, the occasional gig, until in late '72 they moved from college gigs to London pubs.

The next bit you know about. By June of '72 some, I'm sure well-intentioned, journalist coined the phrase 'pub rock' as an umbrella for such diverse talents as the



Kilburns, Bees Make Honey, Chilli Willi, Ducks Deluxe and a whole lot more.

Then the worst happened, the expression was quickly picked up by the trades and became at first fashionable and then passe. Which, looking back on it wasn't a bad thing really—for a start it got bands like the Kilburns a lot of work and opened a door to recording contracts, and secondly, by becoming a fashionable and thus ultimately self-destructive label, it got the trendies in and out of the pubs as quickly as possible and left behind it (in the pubs) the people who really dug the music. And, contrary to what you haven't read in your more pose-conscious weeklies, you can still enjoy very fine music at a reasonable price practically any night of the week at any of a dozen London venues where a couple of years ago you'd have been lucky to find a juke-box or a budding Jimmy Saville.

Anyway, by the summer of '73 the Kilburns were enjoying the first fruits of success. They were being managed by Charlie Gillett and Gordon Nelki as the proposed UK product of their newly-formed Oval Records. The idea was that the Kilburns, then a good commercial prospect, would help float the company's plans to release such American material as eventually appeared on their 'Another Saturday Night' compilation.

Things didn't quite work out as planned though; Oval were on the point of signing with CBS when a much better offer arrived from the newly-formed WEA subsidiary Raft. Soon afterwards a very optimistic Kilburn & The High Roads went into Apple Studios and cut twelve tracks with Tony Ashton producing. Things looked a lot better than they really were however,

because Raft collapsed before the Kilburns' album could be released and none of the label's peers, Warners, Elektra and Atlantic, were willing to agree on the same generous terms as the band had enjoyed with their Raft contract.

When Oval finally settled on a deal with Virgin Records the Kilburns, according to Ian, declined the offer, having unanimously chosen to keep looking for a deal with a major company.

This ended the Kilburns-Oval partnership too, but without bitterness on either side.

Earlier this year the Kilburns found a new manager in Mr Freedom himself, Tommy Roberts. And if at first Roberts, who made his name persuading people to dress in grotesque Americana, seems an odd choice, then it's worth remembering that selling product is really what the rock machine's all about anyway. It was Tommy who got the band their current contract with Pye—not the most fashionable of companies in recent years, but, as Ian pointed out: "It's comforting knowing they own the London Palladium and that Lew Grade's sitting up there. And it's all showbusiness anyway and I feel a lot safer with Des O'Connor than I would with Hatfield and the North!"

The single's on the Dawn label, again, not the kind of label many ZigZag readers will be very familiar with; I don't own any Dawn singles either, but I'm going to make an exception with this one.

If it takes off, there's an album planned for early next year—and if things don't work out the Kilburns are likely to join the Brinsleys in the States, which is the sort of loss I for one could well do without.

□ GIOVANNI DADOMO

GRACE SLICK TALKS



Grace Slick, over the last ten years, has attained great notoriety fronting Jefferson Airplane. She and the rest of the Airplane have always been in and out of the papers for various drug busts, they have constantly been at odds with RCA over song lyrics, cover art, publicity, etc. Paul Kantner—rhythm guitarist, composer and singer in Jefferson Airplane and Jefferson Starship and Grace, amidst much celebrated hoopla, named their child 'god' (with a small 'g' so she would be humble). After much criticism they changed the name to China, then put her in high living colour on the front cover of 'Sunfighter'. At various times in the last two years, Grace has lifted her dress up or taken off her top in concert, shouted various things to audiences and reporters alike, and, in reply, received a heavy onslaught of criticism (much of it unfairly given).

But that is only half her claim to fame. The other half, the musical half, is, to say the least, remarkable. The Jefferson Airplane was for years America's number one touring and recording rock'n'roll band. They were among the originators of the San Francisco Scene (which includes helping start the Fillmore, Rolling Stone, The Grateful Dead, etc.). They started the famous Matrix Club. They were responsible for gaining acceptance for and publicising the fabled light shows of the San Francisco bands (usually done by Joshua Lights), and they were among the first bands to get into free concerts, notably at the Golden Gate Park. They were the first San Francisco band with a record contract, a hit single and a gold album. They eventually got powerful enough to form their own record

company, Grunt Records, in 1970. Between 1965 and 1970, they were responsible for some of the most phenomenal music in all of rock.

Grace's tinkling piano, soaring voice and unique lyrics and music were at the forefront of the band from the second album 'Surrealistic Pillow', on. She has a clear voice with control and depth. Her songs, notably 'Somebody To Love' and 'White Rabbit', the Airplane's first two hit singles, were always controversial and always at the forefront of the Airplane's searing attacks on one thing or another. Songs like 'Two Heads', 'Lather', and 'Eskimo Blue Day' became Airplane classics.

The unique quality of the Airplane's sound was largely derived from having two lead vocalists, one female and one male, in Grace and Marty Balin; the group's founder who gradually shifted further from the limelight to the point where he left what was his own band, three years ago. Their vocal tradeoffs became a trademark. The Airplane created a wall of sound that was fearsome. There are few better bass players in all of rock than Jack Casady and no guitarists with a more unique style than Jorma Kaukonen. Together they formed a sometimes acoustic, sometimes electric splinter blues band called Hot Tuna. Hot Tuna has four equally fine albums.

Spencer Dryden, their second drummer (he replaced Canadian-born ex-Moby Grape Skip Spence just before 'Surrealistic Pillow', when Grace was added) left in 1969. Marty Balin left two years later and Joey Covington, Spencer's replacement, left in '72. In the meantime Grace and Paul started doing solo albums together and separately, culminating

in a Jefferson Starship tour in the spring of this year. About four months ago RCA released a collection of early Jefferson Airplane material called 'Early Flight' that, for various reasons, was never previously released or was only available as a single. That brings us up to date.

The interview I feel is as close as one is going to get to the definite Grace Slick interview. Consequently I have included intact (some editing was necessary or it would have turned into epic proportions) most of the interview. Here and there I've written things in to explain to the uninitiated Airplane/Slick fan what we are talking about. Now, the Grace Slick Interview.

Beetle: Why don't we start by talking about the movie 'Manhole'?

Grace: Well, if there was one . . . Actually there is no such movie. I did it because I thought I'd like to do a movie theme. I'd like to get into all sorts of things and since

there wasn't any movie coming after me to do a theme, I thought I would make up a movie and call it 'Manhole'.

Beetle: Why don't you do a full movie score?

Grace: Eventually we'll probably do something along those lines. We won't do it now because we are still making music. You can't make records, movies and do live stuff. You can make records and movies, but at the moment we are trying to put together another Starship tour and we don't have enough time to do movies too.

Beetle: What happened to Rip Torn's movie 'Richard III'? I understand the Airplane were supposed to be in that.

Grace: Well what he wanted was to make

a movie out of that and/or to make it bigger and take it around and play it in different theatres more or less like a Shakespearian set-up and have motorcycles and all sorts of weirdness going on. He couldn't get the backing for it. We saw him do it in New York onstage. It was a regular version with no funniness. He is excellent but that was a long time ago and it didn't catch on. I think it would catch on now but it didn't at the time.

Beetle: What role was the Jefferson Airplane supposed to play in it?

Grace: I don't know. I imagine we were just going to be like a regular Shakespearian orchestra and/or chorus. In other words, we'd sing and play. At the time that's what we were going to do.

Beetle: The Airplane also shot some footage with Jean-Luc Godard on a rooftop in New York. What happened to that?

Grace: That was part of a bunch of stuff he was doing. We just saw the cuts; I never did see the whole thing of what he had in mind there, but we played on a rooftop in New York and naturally got busted very fast because we were playing some loud music. There were all sorts of people leaning out of windows from the surrounding buildings screaming at us. Some people enjoyed it and a whole lot more didn't. It was fun. We did about three songs until the cops got there. Godard filmed all of it, part of it from across the street in another building. He just filmed what happens when you try and play music in New York. You don't, because you get arrested.

Beetle: The Airplane was also supposed to be in the movie 'Woodstock'. What happened to that?

Grace: We said no because we were supposed to play at 10.30 the night before and it went on and on and on. So we didn't get to play until eight o'clock in the morning and everybody was either so stoned or so tired that the performance was really bad. We looked like we were going to die. We looked like it was going to be the last act in the world, it was really pathetic. We were kind of sloppy.

Beetle: The Airplane, The Dead, Santana and Quicksilver were the first rock bands to get into serious rock on television with the two NET specials called 'Go Ride The Music'. What do you think of the rock shows on television now?

Grace: I imagine a lot of people enjoy it but since unfortunately I make music, so I know how it can sound, and the kind of music we play (either Starship or Airplane—it doesn't make any difference) is so loud and has so many funny tones to it that a TV set can't pick it up. Whenever we played on TV it all sounded really rank because all they could pick up was certain frequencies and that is not what the music is meant for. It's not meant for one hundred frequencies, it's meant for one hundred and thirty or it's not meant for five frequencies, it's meant for twenty-five. So, essentially, if you play on television in our way of playing it doesn't work. We'd have a piano (which means a lot of notes), a twelve-string guitar, a lead guitar, a bass guitar, three singers and drums all coming out of one tinny little speaker. It never did sound really good so we haven't done it lately. We may try to do television again but we are going to have to wait and see how it sounds before we let it go. Hooking it up with an FM station would help but the best thing is still playing live. Even in a

recording studio we have to fool around with knobs incredibly just to get one track of Jack Casady's bass down. It requires the most complicated amount of making and setting up and stuff so it's really hard to pull it off, just making a record. The best thing is live for the kind of stuff we do.

Beetle: How did you score the orchestral parts of 'Manhole' with Steve Schuster?

Grace: What he did was write out more or less what he knows. That's the first time he has done it, so he didn't really know what he was doing. The guy who played first violin in the orchestra (John Georgiadis) helped him some in how to direct and orchestrate. He wrote it all out. The orchestra members were really helpful to him, they'd help him out where he didn't know what he was doing. He did most of it and since it was his first time I thought he did it fairly well. It's pretty hard trying to write for an orchestra.

Beetle: I noticed that the liner notes credit Keith Grant and Steve Schuster with co-production. How were they used since you, David Freiberg and Paul had always handled all the production chores before?

Grace: What we did was the first part. Then, when we went over to England to do the orchestra, Steve was the guy who was the engineer. He also came back and helped us put all the tapes together and mix it. He told us what was good and what wasn't. He actually had a lot to do with how it sounded and he fixed a lot of the 'wolves' that were on it. He's really good. He used to be a bass player so he knows about music and he can play synthesizer and he knows a lot about the board. He helped us tremendously with the album so we called him co-producer.

Beetle: What material did the Starship play on tour?

Grace: Paul's stuff from 'Baron Von Tollbooth And The Chrome Nun' and 'Blows Against The Empire', there's a lot of that and 'Manhole' and some of David's songs. We only did two songs that were Airplane material, one was 'Volunteers' and the other was 'Wooden Ships' which is not really Airplane. David Crosby wrote it with Paul and Stephen Stills so both groups have done it. That's sort of out there so I guess the only song that we did that was actually Airplane was 'Volunteers'.

Beetle: What type of reception did you get without having Jack and Jorma onstage?

Grace: It was really amazing. I thought they were going to get really mad but the people were great. They reacted beautifully, really friendly and warm and everybody enjoyed themselves including the band. We were out for a little over a month. We did New York, Chicago, LA—the regular route.

Beetle: Is there going to be another Starship tour or is it going back into Airplane?

Grace: I think so. I think it is going to be Starship because Jack and Jorma are doing acoustic Hot Tuna. They go back and forth between electric and acoustic and right now they are doing acoustic. They may change it, or maybe just Jorma'll go out or Jack will go out with somebody else or whatever. It changes around so much of the time that I never know what is really going to happen. Sometimes it's Airplane, sometimes it's Tuna, sometimes it's God knows what.

Beetle: What made you, Paul and David

Freiberg get together to do the three man thing for 'Baron Von Tollbooth And The Chrome Nun'?

Grace: David lives here now and then in our house. He is one of Paul's old friends and he had several songs that we liked. Number one: we like him and number two: he plays about five different instruments. He plays viola, piano, bass, mello-tron, rhythm guitar and he can sing. So, he's fairly versatile.

Beetle: Whose idea was the cover of 'Baron Von Tollbooth'?

Grace: It was a combination of stuff. The bodies are delineated and show you where muscles are, they're from some old print that was superimposed on a cornball background. Somebody else liked that tiger, so we stuck the tiger in. It was just sort of a collage of weird junk. It was everybody's idea, so it's just kind of a mess. The quote on the inside was off the chart that the people with the torn off limbs came from. It was a medical chart.

Beetle: You seem to have very strong anti-religious views, as evidenced by 'The Ballad Of The Chrome Nun' and 'Easter'?

Grace: More or less all religions say the same thing—do on to your brother as you would have them do on to you and all that kind of stuff. So, I don't have any particular religious beliefs. I've got a karate teacher who teaches self-discipline and self-control. Particularly the Japanese are interested in their own countries and themselves. In other words you make yourself your own shrine, meaning you take care of it and do as best you can do with others. Western religion is more or less outward. In other words pray to God, do this for other people even though you fall apart, but most religions have the same basic thing they'd like you to do, which is to be friendly to each other. I don't have any specific religion.

Beetle: 'Ballad Of A Chrome Nun' seems to be directly aimed at Catholicism.

Grace: Those are just slams at the Catholic church, which, at the moment, I think is a bit peculiar. Also, Paul is Catholic and we tease each other back and forth with that stuff. He's not Catholic per se but he was brought up as a Catholic. I tease him about it, so I make up funny songs about the Catholic Church and I'll have certain qualities that he makes up songs about and/or talks about. We're just fooling around with each other. Sometimes it's a little weird, most of the time it's pretty good.

Beetle: 'Milk Train', 'Across The Board', and 'Better Lying Down' all have strong sexual imagery. Why would RCA let them get through and not 'Son Of Jesus'?

Grace: It depends on how things are worded. 'Across The Board' goes "Seven inches of pleasure, seven inches going home". If they were questioning me about it I was going to say it was about a gun. I forget how the words go but the song worked out in such a way that talking about that could also be a gun. 'Better Lying Down' doesn't say anything about balling, it just says you look better lying down. I work on a song with a definite thing in mind that everybody is going to be able to understand it although you cannot legally pin it down as being dirty. There are not any dirty words in it. Also at the time that we had trouble with 'Son Of Jesus' the guy who was president of RCA in New York was a Catholic. He was more

annoyed by the reference to Jesus having balled a lady. I think you can even say 'fxkk' on records now, but you can't say Jesus did it. Once you hit on one area and get that straightened out you can go on to another. Like it's okay to talk dirty, they really don't give you that much problem anymore. Okay, that's taken care of, but now you can't say that Jesus did anything so there's a new area every time you turn around. On the Geraldo Rivera show in New York I was asked, "What would you do, Grace, if you had the last ten years of your life to live over, how would it be different?" I said, "I'd have had blonde hair and big tits." They had to bleep the word although they sort of kept it in. They told me you could say 'boobs' on television but not 'tits', so the boards of censors, whoever runs all this junk, are really strange. You never know quite what they are going to get mad at. What the hell is the difference between 'boobs' and 'tits'?

Beetle: You had the same problem with 'Mexico' on TV a few years ago.

Grace: That's out again on 'Early Flight', so they don't care now. Things change. If you can just hold on to your songs long enough they'll be okay in five years. We should just write songs, wait five years and publish them. Then we wouldn't have to hassle with the record company. They'd also be pretty lame by that time.

Beetle: Grunt Records was originally formed with the idea that now you had the money and the following you could say goodbye to RCA and put out what you want. It doesn't seem to have worked.

Grace: No, because that's not what happens. All Grunt Records means is that we have to work harder. They gave us a certain amount of money to, more or less do

the business of taking care of phone calls and taking care of publicity, setting dates and hiring PR people of our own because RCA is all in New York and it was so damn hard to talk to them because every time you want to say something you have to talk to them on the phone for five hours. Nothing ever gets really done because it's really hard to keep your ear on the phone all day. Grunt Records doesn't mean we have any more freedom. They still run us because they gave us the money to do Grunt Records. Also, Grunt Records is starving to death. For RCA, if they take on an act that doesn't catch on, since it's a multi-million dollar corporation it doesn't make too much difference. But for us, when Grunt Records signed up certain acts that didn't take off, we were stuck with the bills, which means we have to pay RCA back for what they loaned us, to the tune of \$25,000 in the recording studio, \$25,000 here and there, so Grunt Records is actually starving to death. It's still going, but the personnel is down to about five from twenty-five and it's in pretty sad condition. Running your own company and trying to make music at the same time is a little weird.

Beetle: When Grunt was originally formed Bill Thompson (Jefferson Airplane's business manager) was talking about holograms, video cassettes sort of a 'future of the media' idea. Has that sort of gone down the drain?

Grace: It has in so far that we don't have the money to fool around with. Paul still has his idea of doing the Starship thing on video tape. I'd love to do it. When I said I liked the idea of movies I didn't necessarily mean just for theatre. I'm talking about television, anything where you get all your senses absorbed—visual, audio

and they are also talking about getting smells into theatre. You'd go somewhere, like to a theatre or your own bedroom, if they can work out those video discs. That was the point of Jefferson Airplane's light show. You extend more than just one of your senses.

Beetle: Not many groups since the original San Francisco bands have picked up on the lightshow. There is only one that uses it to any degree and that's Hawkwind.

Grace: For one thing it's already been done. For another thing, you don't ever play a piece of music exactly the same amount of time live. A film is exactly so long, say three minutes and fourteen seconds long. A song could have its own sort of visual image, it doesn't necessarily have to be a liquid light show. It could be real people going through the story of the song or whatever you decide you want to do. The only trouble is that when you play live you can never play it just exactly the three minutes and fourteen seconds. So there's a little trouble there. I don't know quite how to get around that one except you can do it by just running a light show programme where they just more or less do stuff that's odd enough so that it does not necessarily tie exactly up with the music. It should blend with it, but it doesn't have to be right exactly in the same sprocket.

Beetle: Is Mole Music your own company?

Grace: Yeah, it's my publishing company. Each person in the band who writes music has their own publishing company. There's something about having your own publishing company that is, either tax-wise or corporate-wise, supposed to be better for you. Also, Jefferson Airplane had a manager before I was with them, Matthew Bageson, and there's a whole



Paul Kantner, Grace Slick, David Freiberg

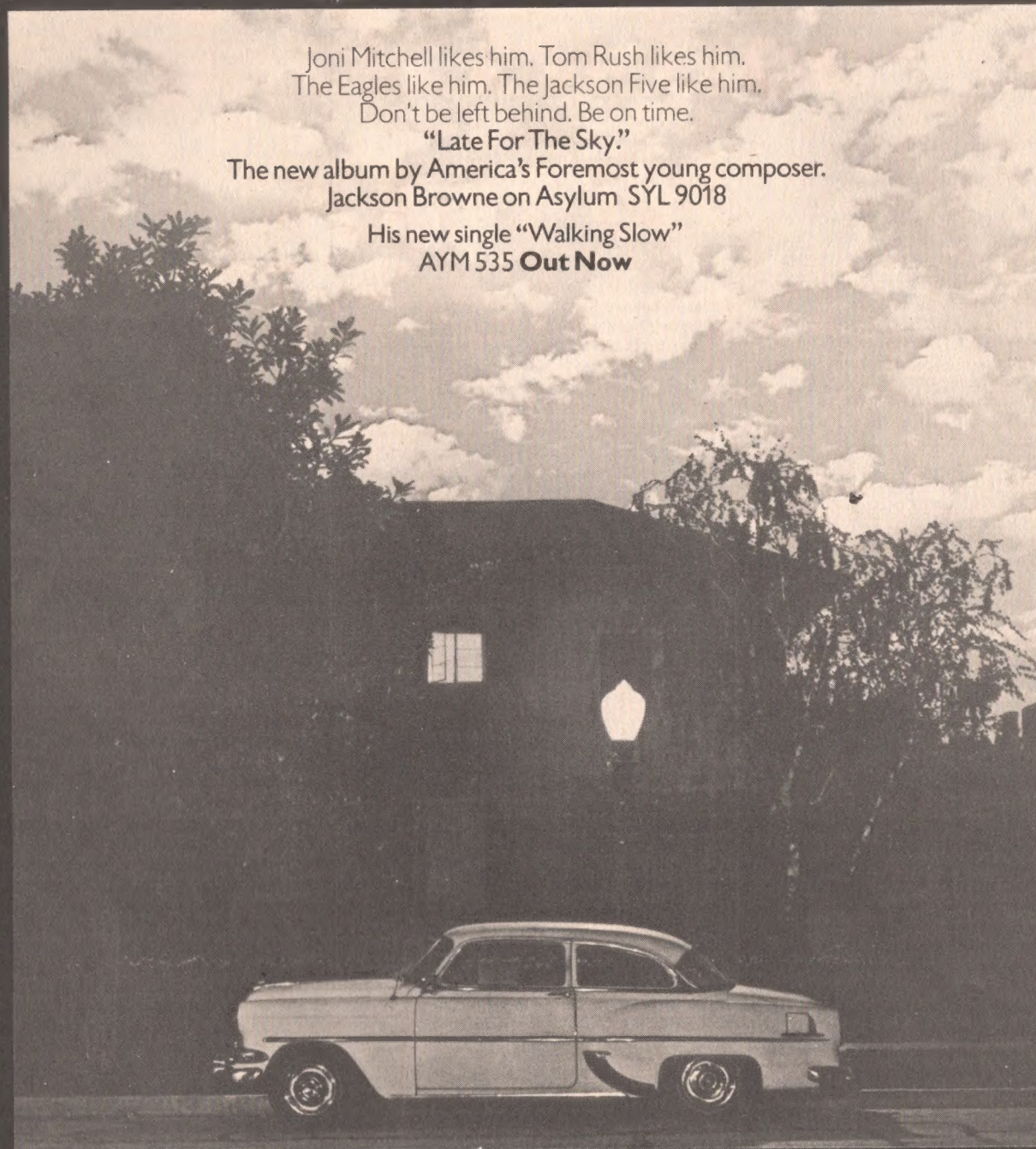
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bunch of legal problems with him and his publishing company so we actually had to make new publishing companies, because if we had put our songs in the old publishing company then Matthew gets all the money. It's mostly for tax reasons and legal reasons. They just said, "Hey, you want your own publishing company because blah, blah, blah," and I said, Yeah, sure". Everybody has their different names. God Tunes is Paul's, Fish-Scent Music is Jorma's, John Cipollina's is Black Dragon. I just sort of picked Mole Music out of the air.

Beetle: Was 'Sunfighter' deliberately more structured than 'Blows Against The Empire'?

Grace: It was simpler. In other words there were more individual songs. It depends upon the mood you're in. Sometimes I write songs such as 'Manhole' that are really long; Paul did one like that on 'Blows Against The Empire'. Sometimes you have an entire concept in your mind that goes that long and other times you write a song that is one or two minutes long such as 'White Rabbit'. People seem to like the short ones better but then Cat Stevens did 'Foreigner Suite' and that is still in the charts, so it doesn't really make that much difference, you just have to do it well. Personally, I like 'Blows Against The Empire' better than 'Sunfighter'.

Beetle: What inspired 'Silver Spoon'?

Cannibalism is rather a strange theme. Grace: I was living in Bolinas which is sort of a real small hippy town. Most of the people there are vegetarians. They kept harassing me about eating meat and then I started thinking about it and I was telling them the deal is that plants can hear music and they respond to you being pleasant to them. You have to kill some living organism in order to eat. Then I started thinking about how you could get all the way into it and eat people. I'm still not sure that's a bad idea. If a person dies a natural death, for instance, if Einstein were to die a natural death I think it may be a good idea to eat his brain. You are what you eat. I'm not into it yet. It's really weird but I have given it some thought and that's about as far as I've got. I'm not sure if it's good for you or not. People have done it before and nothing seems to happen, they don't die or anything.

Chemicals affect you such as when you get really drunk. So what you put in you does affect you, it does affect the way you think. If you eat really well and take really good care of your body, your mind works better. I was thinking people who are vegetarians seem to be less aggressive than people who are meat eaters. Now, **something** about what you eat affects the way you act. If someone dies who is very calm and takes things in their stride you want to eat his nervous system or whatever controls the nervous system because that might help you become what he had that you didn't have. I think that is one of the reasons for alcoholics, is that they lack in their body that thing which other people have that makes them feel at ease. Alcohol tends to relax you for a certain time. Then it turns into aggression. For about an hour you feel really happy and loose. If you keep drinking it reverses it affect on your body and you become aggressive. All those chemicals have a lot to do with how you think and go about your business.

Beetle: Did the vegetarian experience also

inspire the song 'Eat Starch Mom'?

Grace: No, that was a title that Jorma had said. He said, "I've got this music for a song but I don't have any words. I've got the title though." And I said, "You've got a title," and he said, "Yeah, it's called 'Eat Starch Mom'." and I said okay. So, I just sort of played around with that. I don't know what he had in his mind so it's just sort of a silly song.

Beetle: Who is Roy Buckman? (The song 'Look At The Wood' was dedicated to him).

Grace: He gave me a book by Garcia Lorca who is one of Spain's revolutionary poets. He gave me that which sort of triggered my interest in Spain. He was around in Bolinas when I was and he is very much like the guy that was in the song. He did a whole bunch of woodwork for us and he lives more or less like that guy does. He is very pleasant and very bright and he reads, lives out in the forest, lives his life, works in wood and is amazingly intelligent and self-sufficient... to the point of being able to live outside like that and eat whatever happens to come along and stuff like that. I like him so I dedicated it to him.

Beetle: What has made you so interested in Spain?

Grace: The music knocks me out. The government stinks but their music is amazing to me. It is passionate and violent and yet it is very rigid. I mean very controlled at the same time and I like the combination of those two things. I like stuff that is really well organised, in other words it's the same thing as going out on a tour. If you practice and practice and practice and get the thing as right as you possibly can, then you're so familiar with it that you can play it and be spontaneous on stage. That is the way flamenco music is to me. It is very complicated. It isn't on 'Manhole' because I don't know it well enough. With their music, you have to practice your ass off but then once you do, you go down to the local bar and there's some chick dancing her ass off. She's got a very straight back but it is very passionate music and people are getting drunk and partying around. I just like the idea of it. If you live in this country and you study some other country's music and you try to join them together it's obviously going to be 'melodo'. I bastardised it but what you can, depending upon who's looking at it, be beautiful with that. Some people get really annoyed at it. "What are you doing with Spanish music? What are you trying to do?"

It's like some people get mad if a white girl and a black guy go together and have a kid. Some people don't give a rat's ass one way or another and it's a beautiful child. The gal that takes care of China while we're gone has kids. She's white and her old man is black and boy, is their kid good looking. The kid's about twelve years old and God is he tasty. He's got sort of coffee-cream coloured skin and he's really a tasty little guy. Bastardising stuff, whether music or races is not necessarily repulsive. I find it kind of interesting.

Beetle: I noticed in the song 'Crazy Miranda' from 'Bark' you really put down women's lib yet in interviews you have come out for it.

Grace: I got a really terrible review from that. In Boston some chick came in and she weighed about two hundred pounds

and she hadn't washed her hair and she had on dirty pants and a dirty shirt and a cap all slung down to one side and she looked like a mess. She was standing around with her hands in her hip pockets. Women's lib is one thing but going around and imitating men is a little sad. It's like she couldn't figure out anything else to do. So it wasn't putting down women's lib so much as it was putting down the idea of having to imitate other people even if it's other women. There's a lot of singers who figure they've got to sound like Janis Joplin and dance like Tina Turner. It looks pathetic because they are not either one of these people. The best deal is to be yourself no matter what that is.

Beetle: What happened to the Airplane's proposed idea with Abbie Hoffman to tour Vietnam during the war?

Grace: I'd love to play the Far East. It was an idea to play for both sides but they won't let us out of the country. The only place I think they'll let us play is Japan. I'd like to play Communist China too but I don't know if it is possible. I think a couple of people have played Communist China. I don't know if we could make it or not. I'd sure like to try though.

Beetle: Why did Spencer Dryden originally leave the Airplane?

Grace: At the time we were playing sets that were four hours long and the guys who play guitar don't have to work that hard compared to a drummer. Spencer's very small. He's a good drummer, he's a real good drummer, but it was just so damn hard on him to play for four hours and they'd go into these jams and the guitar players would turn around and start stamping their feet on the floor at him saying "faster", "faster, louder, faster" and the guy was just falling apart by the end of it. So he had to stop and play with a group that wasn't quite into playing four hour sets. We aren't anymore either, but at the time it was just tearing his brains out. He's in New Riders Of The Purple Sage now.

Spencer's also into the idea of making movies but he is still with New Riders and the business of being in a band and making movies, unless you've got an awful lot of money, is tough. I don't mean that you would have to pay for it but you've got to have all this transportation and everything set up so tight so that you could be in all these different places. It is expensive just getting there even if you don't have to pay for it. Alice Cooper, I think, has done a variety of TV spots and is going to be in a movie and stuff like that. Now that guy's got the bucks to hire a jet to get from one place to another so that he can have four hours of sleep until he has to go on and be on the set but Spencer doesn't have the money and I know we don't to go around hiring Lear Jets to get from one place to another. So what we're going to have to do is wait until either we decide not to play for awhile or wait until there is some time between.

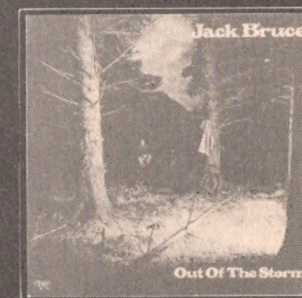
Beetle: Around the time Spencer left Marty Balin started playing a lesser role in the band. What was the reason for that?

Grace: Marty has got his own band called Bodacious. As you keep growing and moving around and listening to more music each member of the band gets preferences. Mine is sort of half-assed classical although I like all kinds of music. I'd like to do an album of songs from different countries and cultures and use on each song the people who made it, like use Spanish

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songs, use the people who actually do that music. Paul tends towards folk-type music, Jorma prefers blues and Marty was sort of interested in the sound of Otis Redding. . . . Marty sort of liked that idea so that is what he is trying to aim for with Bodacious. He left so he could do what he wanted to do.

Beetle: Papa John told me in the summer there were bitter feelings when Marty left. Is that true?

Grace: Not particularly, only I think Marty couldn't get Airplane to do as many of the kind of songs that he wanted to do or maybe what he would have liked to have them do. It's not that way anymore, he and Paul are writing a song together now. So all that's a long time ago. There's no problem with Spencer or Marty. Everybody sort of moves in and out of everybody else's territory.

Beetle: How did Marty's leaving affect the sound on 'Bark'?

Grace: Well, it does in that there is not really a strong lead male voice. Paul's a harmony singer. David Freiberg can sing lead but he is more or less a harmony singer too. So, since there is not a powerful lead male vocal that affects the band. I'd love to have another guy singing. I liked it. I like the idea of having both onstage. But, I don't think Marty will ever play with us again because he has got his own band and he is not that nutty about the kind of music we play. At the moment he and Bodacious are just playing live and I think he is still more or less into producing other groups too.

Beetle: Whose idea was 'Early Flight'?

Grace: That's RCA. We signed a contract which says the Airplane has to put out a certain amount of records up to certain dates. Since the Airplane hasn't been playing together and we haven't been making that many records what they're doing is going through the old tapes and getting out anything they can possibly get out of there. When they first said they were going to do it we thought "Ahh God is that ever terrible", because legally they're right, there is nothing we can do about it. But, I really like the record. I enjoyed it, it was fun to listen to. I think it was more fun for me to listen to it simply because I hadn't heard them for a long time and they were remastered well. The song 'Mexico' when it first came out was mastered just terribly and Maurice, the guy who did the mastering on this session, did a really fine job of mastering that particular song. So I enjoyed listening to it. I don't think it holds that much interest for anybody else because they weren't in the band so there isn't that thing where you can sit back and say, "Oh remember when so and so fell off the desk when he was doing that part" and stuff like that. So it's more old times than actually being that good but I enjoyed it for that reason. It was also nice to have 'Mexico' and 'Have You Seen The Saucers' available again. They were out on a single, never on an LP, and the single didn't do anything naturally because at the time you couldn't talk about dop or what a jerk Nixon was. Nobody ever played very much of it.

Beetle: Why are the Airplane albums so far apart these days?

Grace: Jack and Jorma went to Europe to do speed skating and they were there for a long time and they were doing Hot Tuna for a long time so there wasn't any Airplane so we got together and did Starship. Air-



plane is just sort of in a void. I can't say it is not ever going to play again. I sort of doubt it but you never know. Everything is just sort of suspended. Jack and Jorma like to do Hot Tuna and play blues so they've been doing that mostly and we like to do the stuff we're doing so we've been doing that so there hasn't been any Airplane albums. You can't force people to make music because if you do then it doesn't sound any good. RCA keeps saying, "Why don't you do something" and I keep telling them, "Look, it's not like an adding machine." Music, unfortunately, is really sporadic and you get these inspirations and you can't just sit down and say, "Now I'm going to write a marvellous song. At 10.15 I'm going to write a marvellous song." It doesn't happen. Sometimes in the middle of the night you get an idea or you'll be reading a book and the guy gives you an idea that you want to expound on. It just comes at all these weird times. There is no way you can force Airplane to get it together because it just isn't. There's no desire particularly on the parts of the people in the Airplane to do it. You can't force music.

Beetle: In an interview you did in the spring of 1973 you said "Any cretin could do what the Jefferson Airplane does".

Grace: I think anybody who's got a real vague sense of music can, if they have the desire to do it, make music. I've never heard of anybody who doesn't hum or whistle sometimes. So if you just decide that you're going to get a bunch of people together the best deal is to get friends. Then it works out better or you can get somebody you just like. If you get people you don't like then there's trouble. It's just pop music, except I think David Freiberg and Steve Schuster can, and I can more or less write out melody notes and so can Paul but none of us can really

write music. It's all just by ear and it's people sitting around and learning other people's songs. Essentially, anybody can do it. You've got to keep at it, but if you keep at it you can do it. I think the power of the mind is incredible. If you really have a desire to do something chances are unless you get shot by the government first you'll be able to do it. Beetle: The last thing I wanted to ask you was whether there will ever be another Jefferson Airplane album or tour?

Grace: I sort of doubt it, but I never know. It's always a surprise. You call the office and you never know what's going to happen.

Things look pretty bleak for what was probably America's greatest rock'n'roll band, Jefferson Airplane. They seem to have gone the way of The Beatles; too many side trips continually eating away at the whole until the band finally dissolves. But, out of it all, we have Jefferson Starship, Hot Tuna, Marty Balin's Bodacious and Papa John's Zulus. Spencer Dryden continues with the New Riders Of The Purple Sage while Joey Covington's band, Fat Fandango, recently broke up (according to Grace, Joey originally left the Airplane because of a fight with someone in Hot Tuna when they were in Jamaica? Papa John told me Joey had left because of a disagreement with Paul? Who knows?).

Grunt Records is broke with the only product in the near future being Jorma's solo album. Hot Tuna may go into the studio after that and another Jefferson Starship album and tour should be in the works before the end of the year. That, my friends, is the Jefferson Airplane today.

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THE RICK NELSON STORY

PART THREE:

The Stone Canyon Band

The perceptive interviewer will very likely have noticed a certain reluctance on the part of the interviewee to speak about the past. This reluctance, which is sometimes an inability more than a conscious desire, to speak about the past, increases exponentially, I believe the word is, the further back into the mists of time the interviewer attempts to travel. Which is a posh way of saying that there's rather more actual interview in this final part of the Rick Nelson marathon than you've been used to.

Last time, we left Rick with an artistic ally, if not commercially, acceptable album called 'Perspective', and at yet another crossroads in his career. What should he do next? The teenage idol of the fifties and early sixties was an amusing memory, and in all honesty, there wasn't much happening in the way of anything.

FORMATION

"Then I decided: I wanted to sing, but I couldn't go back and record the same type of songs. I wanted to grow, to create and perform on my own without big studio arrangements; and for that I needed my own group again. We started to rehearse four and five days a week in a building by Dad owns in Burbank. We improvised and experimented and listened to other people's work, people like Randy Newman and Tim Hardin. Then one day I heard 'Nashville Skyline' by Bob Dylan, and I knew where I wanted to go. I listened to that album for days—the songs were so simple, yet cryptic at times. I wanted to sing songs like that, and, if possible, also write like that. So for a year and a half that's all I did. We'd rehearse during the day, and I'd write at night.

"Our first major appearance was at the Troubadour in Hollywood, and the audience was very enthusiastic. After that we appeared in small clubs throughout the country, and recorded our first album. We also had a single on the charts, Dylan's 'She Belongs To Me'. That was very encouraging. I guess that's the only thing I miss about those days—to have a single released, and to hear it two days later on all the stations. Yeah, I guess I'd like that again."

The above was part of a feature by Shaun Considine in the New York Times of Jan. 23, 1972, and it seems to encapsulate nicely a little of this period's history. The first thing was that single Rick mentioned, 'She Belongs To Me'/'Promises' and so far this particular session is not immortalised on an album, although both the songs are differently recorded on the first album we'll be talking about. 'She Belongs To Me' was a million seller, although in all honesty, I'm not sure why. It's not that it's bad, but it just seems a little ordinary vocally. Mind you, the instrumental side of things is fine, and equally 'Promises', which is one of Rick's own songs, has good playing. Unfortunately, there's a rather predominant chorus of backing vocalists on the top side. But we're digressing, and we will a little more with Rick using 'She Belongs To Me' to illustrate a point.

"When I first went with MCA, it was Decca, and there was like a new regime every four months. It was really frightening when I went there. But with 'She Belongs To Me', I went in and recorded that without them knowing, because I got pre-empted out of the studios over there. I said, 'Well, this isn't a hobby to me, you know, this is what I do for a living,' so I just went in a recorded it, and they all got mad because I said, 'Just put it out,' you know, 'Here's the single, just put it out'. It's just a complete new company now, and it used to be that I was embarrassed to say I was with Decca. But now, if I went to sign with a record company, I'd want to sign with MCA."

ZZ: We saw a Stone Canyon—it's the other end of Sunset, isn't it?
RN: Well, it's right down here, it's off Ventura. I was trying to think of a name...
ZZ: It's a good name—it's very Californian!
RN: Yeah, got 'Canyon' in there...

Now all the above is one version of how the Stone Canyon came to be formed. Now a slightly different version, from my first interview with Rick.

"The way it came about was that I was supposed to do a date at the Troubadour in LA, and I was really looking around for a band. I got to know Randy Meisner through going down to the Troubadour and seeing him play with Poco there, and we struck up a casual acquaintance. Then I heard he was looking round to do something else—he had just left Poco, I don't know really why—he wasn't very happy with them for some reason. He was living with a drummer, Pat Shanahan, and Allen Kemp, a lead guitarist. He knew Pat and Allen because they had all played together in a group called, at various times, the Poor and the Soul Survivors, up in Denver, Colorado. They had a couple of hit records in Denver as the Poor, but I don't know which label they were on. Anyway, it happened that they were all available to play at that time, and it worked out real well.

"Then I wanted to use a steel player. On the first date at the Troubadour, Tom Brumley wasn't with us, and I used Sneaky Pete Kleinow. At that time, he was still with the Burrito Brothers, and he could only do that one date, so I used Buddy Emmons for a couple of nights. I'd never

tried a steel guitarist before that date, and I only had three or four days to rehearse using one, although I had a feeling it would be OK, because many of my early songs had been country influenced. But Tom is great, I was really lucky to get him. After we'd played that first date, I was going to record a live album, so it was actually our second date there and by that time, I'd got together with Tom, who really hadn't been playing for about a year, because he was manufacturing steel guitars."



STONE CANYON BAND. L-R: Allen Kemp, Randy Meisner, Rick Nelson, Pat Shanahan, Tom Brumley

There will be more on the subject of Mr Brumley a little later in this piece, but at the moment, I can't find the particular article from which I want to quote. Concerning the rest of the original members of the Stone Canyon Band, you can find out more about them, and especially about Randy Meisner, from ZZ24 (Poco article and tree) and ZZ29 (Eagles article and tree).

IN CONCERT
And that's the title of the first album from this latest outburst. You'll have gathered from what has gone before, and from the title of the album that it's live, and a highly biased source, the by now famous Rocky Prior, tells me that 'Rolling Stone' described the album as the best live one in several years. In fact, I'm not about to disagree with that, because it's certainly no strain to play it frequently. It was done at the Troubadour in LA, just like the man said, and Rick had a few words to say about that establishment.

"What I started doing is playing the Palomino, and for one thing, you get paid. At the Troubadour, it ends up costing you to play there. They pay the minimum to everybody, and it's used as a kind of a springboard for people. It works with a lot of people, but I ended up—I did it three or

four times, and it becomes as if you're kind of expected. 'Well, when are you gonna play the Troubadour again?' so it's nothing new."

Pete and I went to the Troubadour a couple of times, and it was pretty nice. The tequilas flowed freely, and the place wasn't so crowded that it was difficult. We saw Loudon Wainwright, Bonnie Raitt, Wendy Waldman and somebody else—quite an impressive bunch really, particularly when you consider that the Roxy and the Whisky are very close at hand. London, in that way, you don't make it. Someone said to me in Hollywood that the Troubadour was only able to remain open because of the booking policy and the occasional live album which was made there, but I really don't know the truth of that. Anyway, it makes the Speakeasy look like a dungheap.

Ah yes, the record. An announcement, some applause, and straight into a 'hello' song, 'Come On In', written by Rick. Straight away, the instrumental power of the band is demonstrated, with some dinky little solos from Brumley and Kemp, and some really tasty harmonies. Rick sings at the bottom, Kemp a step up, and Meisner positively excels at the top. A good track, and immediately into 'Hello, Mary Lou', which inevitably has a somewhat different treatment, but no less good for that. Brumley's fills are beautiful, and Kemp, whose guitar playing I found rather suspect when I saw the band on their British tour, holds his own. Rick introduces 'Violets Of Dawn' as being by "a good friend", Eric Andersen. Nevertheless, Eric's surname suffers the usual mis-spelling on his songwriter credit, even though he writes the appreciative sleeve note inside, and makes it clear that it's an 'e' and not an 'o' at the end of his name. Just to make up for that, let me plug a double album in Vanguard's fine

'Best Of'/'Greatest Hits' series, 'The Best Of Eric Andersen', which contains the original of this excellent song. A kind of medley, composed of 'Who Cares About Tomorrow' and 'Promises' (the B side of 'She Belongs To Me', but in studio form on the single) follows, then 'She Belongs To Me' again, but with rather superior harmonies and so on, when compared to the studio cut. Up to this point it's all very fine stuff, and only the choice of 'If You Gotta Go, Go Now' mars this side of the album. It's a bit too much of a hackneyed number for my money, and Brumley plays what becomes a rather irritating lick during the verses. Still, a very good start.

Before I forget, the mention of a sleeve note by Eric Andersen may have confused a few of you, who are even now searching their copies of the album. Unfortunately, you've been the helpless victims of British cheapo cheapo, and you should think about replacing your copy with an American cut out, which is how I know about the fold out sleeve. Side two starts off with a gentle percussion beat, then Rick goes into 'I'm Walkin'' to a scream of delight from the audience, which you will find becomes fully justified by the time you get into the track, which is quite beautiful. Then there's a hark-back to that Tim Hardin influenced album, and we get 'Red Balloon', which works better in this band context than in the highly orchestrated versions of Tim's other songs by Rick. When you're this far through the album, and you're digging it like I am, it doesn't matter that the next track is 'Louisiana Man', and certainly the version of 'Believe What You Say' is great, with a driving beat and those reliable Brumley fills. In fact, by this time one is beginning to get the picture that Tom Brumley is the James Burton of the Stone Canyon Band, if you see what I



year, I was trying to get to sleep, knowing that on October 29th I'd be in California.

Am I missing that now . . . So I'm bound to like a song which starts off 'I'm going to California, and I'll be there in a week' and goes on about living in a canyon. In fact 'California' is the title of the song, and maybe it's not quite as good a song as it looks. I mean, the place is like being on another planet. If you've never been, then start saving right now. California is paradise, but paradise lost, and a visit, if not emigration, is just essential. The rest of the songs are just fine, and I like them all, with special reference to 'How Long', which is a little melancholy, but still great. In general, the business about Cetera not having the right voice can be appreciated, and in fact at times it sounds like they've employed some lady back-up singers. Brumley is at worst neat and tasteful, and at best, as on 'The Dolphin', positively brilliant. There's also a percussion instrument on that track, perhaps maracas, which sounds enormously like a dog scratching microbes from beneath its armpit. Most effective. Also, Rick himself plays piano on 'The Reason Why', doing very well, and if it's him doing that 'hit them 88's' electric piano solo on the same track, he's really got the instrument under control. Anyway, enough of this trivia—this is a record you should have, just like the last one, and I suppose that this was the album that finally, once and for all, proved that Rick was his own man, and not an ageing fifties rocker still trying to earn a living on the strength of a bunch of golden oldies. Buy this one—OK?

RUDY THE FIFTH

Why not Rick the Twenty-Seventh? Well, it's not so catchy, is it? In fact, this seems to be the twenty-seventh album of Rick Nelson, which is some achievement. Wait until David Bowie or Brian Ferry etc. . . . 'Rudy The Fifth', whatever it may mean, is an album which continually makes me think of other great albums I'm very fond of. In fact, it's also the record that justifies the length of this piece. There's nothing bad here at all—perhaps the odd track which verges on the ordinary, like 'Love Minus Zero (No Limit)', which is an irreproachable song, of course, but is here sung in rather a routine manner. But we're moving too fast again, because the record starts off the way it means to continue with Tom Brumley doing a very lifelike take-off of a train getting up steam. The track is titled 'This Train', and although it may sound a little hackneyed, it all works a treat. A bit of phased drumming, some great bass playing from Randy Meisner, who had by now returned to the group, and even some good piano. Now we don't know whether it was Rick or Andy Belling who played piano, because where Andy plays, there's supposed to be a little sword thing, like this—t, but none of the tracks are so marked. Another great piece of copy reading, I suppose. . . . Next comes 'Just Like A Woman', with some more exemplary steel playing from Tom Brumley, and here we have a good version. I imagine that some might consider it unnecessary, but I believe that it's only as unnecessary as anyone doing a first class song—even Bowie and Ferry etc, etc. 'Sing Me A Song', like 'This Train' is one of Rick's own songs,

and it's a little reminiscent of 'You Ain't Going Nowhere', which is a good excuse to mention the very wonderful Starry Eyed And Laughing, who play a pretty neat version of the song themselves. On 'Sing Me A Song', there's a good example of the way Brumley has taken over the lead playing—Kemp does a few notes, then the steel guitar picks it up and plays a glorious solo. Very much the same happens on the next track, 'The Last Time Around', where Brumley's solo is positively ludicrous. When the track starts, you just know that you're going to hear a good song, and you sure do. It's a little like some of the things on Terry Melcher's album, which I rate very highly indeed. Also, the orchestration is well done, as usual by Jimmie Haskell, and that seems a good cue for a quote from Rick on the subject of arrangements.

"In those early days, arrangements weren't formalised. They just slipped into place, because we rehearsed a lot. Just like the band I have now—we were always playing together, and that's the best atmosphere in which arrangements can evolve. We recorded by just sitting around and playing until something came out that we liked. There's a certain amount of freedom in that approach, and it gives everyone the chance to try different things. However,

Jimmie Haskell has done all the other arrangements, on and off, right from the start up to 'Rudy The Fifth'. He writes beautiful string scores, and he's really good." Next comes the first of two tracks which are in fact the same song, 'Song For Kristin'. The lady is Rick's Mrs, of course, and the tributes to her are instrumental. On the first side, there's a classical guitar type piece. It's nice, if a little out of context with the rest of the record—however, it's the correct length, which is short. The version on the other side is guitar, but with a string section, and is probably marginally preferable. The end of the first side is 'Honky Tonk Women', which has some more good bass playing, as well as fine drumming from Shanahan, and some quite outstanding steel licks (again). The song is played in a rather more staccato fashion than in its original by the Strolling Ones (thank you, Benny Hill). Altogether, an excellent side, and there's no let up on side two, which starts with another remake, this time of Johnny 'Running Bear' Preston's 'Feel So Fine', and again with piano either by Rick or by Andy Belling, of whom I know nothing else. The song fades into a joke ending, hardly the right herald for one of Rick's most excellent songwriting and vocal performances, 'Life'. The only word for this song is one of the many panegyrics I've used before (thanx, Al Clark), and with the syncopated backing, the sympathetic orchestration and the cymbal snaps coming from the right hand speaker (left, if mine are wrongly wired again), this is a goodie indeed. 'Thank You Lord' is a pseudo-religious song, which starts slowly, then develops into a Southern gospel type rave-up. I wrote in my notes that again it reminded me of Terry Melcher, although I'm not altogether sure why as I sit here tripeing. We've already dealt with the second version of 'Song For Kristin' and 'Love Minus Zero', so it's up to the final track, 'Gypsy Pilot', which is a raver of the 'Fortune Teller' persuasion, both lyrically and musically, and having been written by Rick, is fairly autobiographical to boot. It's fairly good, too, but after 'Life', it doesn't have a chance, even with its Hawkwind type ending.

There's one little coda to 'Rudy The Fifth', in the form of a single, which was released here on April 16th, 1971, of 'Life', a different version, without the strings which are on the album version, and 'California', which is from the album. I'd be interested to hear from anyone who doesn't require their copy, or has a duplicate—the number is MCA MU1135. Ta.

GARDEN PARTY

Ah, you know a little bit about this one, don't you? Let's do a bit of quoting before we get on to the record. First from a biography. "Not to forget the new album's namesake, 'Garden Party', which was the result of his not-so-welcome reception at a Madison Square Garden rock revival concert. The song says goodbye to the people who booed him there, those who wanted to hear the songs of an era long gone. 'I never believe in rock and roll revivals,' says Rick. 'They're people trying to recapture something that can't be brought back, but I talked myself into it by thinking that performing for such a large audience was definitely worthwhile. I didn't know anything about these shows or what people expected. They kept looking at me and my long hair, as if they couldn't believe I was the same person. The evening was a depressing one, but in a way it was good—for it renewed my belief in myself and what I should be doing.'" From the first interview, before the song had been heard—"I was talked into doing the Richard Nader thing, but playing at Madison Square Garden was the clincher. I didn't want it to be called a rock'n'roll revival show, but it was. People were there just to see artists coming out of like closets or something from the fifties, do their thing, and then go back. We had to re-learn all the old songs, but when I walked on the stage, I don't think they recognised me without the braces on my teeth."

From another biography—"Scattered throughout the crowd at Madison Square Garden, there are always a few easily detec-

table cases of premature senility. At Volume VII in October of 1971, the symptoms were most in evidence. Special guest star billing on that occasion went to Rick Nelson and the Stone Canyon Band. Now granted, Rick Nelson no more belongs at a Rock Revival than Paul McCartney. One tends to forget that Rick has matured into one of Country Rock's most accomplished performers, equal certainly to Poco and the Burritos, and perhaps better than the currently popular Eagles. Listen to how much better Rick's original of 'Hello Mary Lou' is, compared to the recent revivals by Creedence and the New Riders. There seems to be, however, some lingering prejudice against Rick because of his teen idol days. Perhaps that's why his latest work remains obscure, except to an enlightened few. Did anyone bother to report that George Harrison was on his way to see Rick perform in England recently, when he and Patti had their car accident? Anyway, Rick came on that night and reminded a few people that it was the 1970's, and they didn't like him for it. He offered the most impressive set of the entire evening, and they booed him. They couldn't cope with it. Rick didn't play the game. He didn't pretend that Madison Square Garden was the biggest malt shop in the world, and that he was a jukebox that hadn't been tampered with since 1961."

Heavy stuff, squire? By this time, another bass player change had occurred, Randy Meisner having finally left for the Eyrie, and been replaced by Steve Love. This seems a good time to backtrack a little on the various members of the Stone Canyon Band up to this point. I won't bother with Meisner, because his story seems to be well documented, and I don't know anything other than what has already been said on the subject of Tim Cetera. Pat Shanahan, apart from being in the Poor and so on, seems to have been one of the Curt Boetcher/Gary Usher people, because he appears on the legendary Millennium album, and also on a Together Records double obscurity

called 'Birth Announcement' by one Danny Cox. If anyone knows anything, please let me know. Allen Kemp is shrouded in obscurity—the only other credit I have for him is as part of the live backing band for a rather obscure bunch known as Dalton and Dubarri, who Pete and I saw on our second night in L.A. If any of you are really into obscuresville, would it be of interest to know that Dalton and Dubarri is a reincarnation of another never-heard-of-them group called Boone's Farm? Thought not. Then we come on to Tom Brumley. A friend of mine called Tony Byworth, who is so knowledgeable as to make me feel an imbecile on the subject of country rock (shut up at the back there!), has photocopied for this article the May 1972 issue of 'Country Music People', which deals at some length with the steel guitar and the players thereof. So thanks, Tony, and thanks C.M.P. for the information which follows. The first thing which strikes me as interesting is that Tom's father, Albert E. Brumley, wrote 'I'll Fly Away' and 'Turn Your Radio On'. Did you know that? Apparently, Tom and Albert are going to make an album of the latter's songs, including those two, so look out for it. Tom's main claim to fame before joining Rick Nelson was that he was with Buck Owens and the Buckaroos from December '63 until February 1969, at which point he became fed up with the constant travelling (Buck Owens is huge in the States). Tom then became manager of a company which built steel guitars, called ZeeBee. The name comes from one Zane Beck who started the company, and Tom stayed with them, not playing at all, for a year, before joining the Stone Canyon Band. He has also played on sessions with the Hagers (now on Asylum), Susan Raye, the Bakersfield Brass and Rose Maddox, about most of whom I know nothing, and is also doing a steel album, which should be complete by now, with Gene Moles, about whom etc. Rick talked a little about his faithful steel player. "He told me that he really did want



to play—he'd been on the road with Buck Owens for so long that it was driving him crazy. He's still involved with ZeeBee guitars, and I think he owns part of the company, still kind of oversees it a little. Tom's really good—it's a really versatile instrument, but people are so quick to just put it in one category, because that's all they've ever heard as the way it's been played. You can get all sorts of sounds out of it, and you can do it without making it a mechanical-type sound too, without making it sound like it's coming through a Leslie speaker or something. I've never really believed in that, you know—a steel guitar should sound like a steel guitar, and not an organ. Anyway, Tom's a really super person, and we get along real well, and think the same way about a lot of things." Does he ever write songs?

"Yeah, as a matter of fact he wrote a song that was a big instrumental hit for Buck Owens, but I can't remember the name of it. It's hard for someone who thinks instrumentally to write, I imagine, because he's never really thought about writing words. That's why it's much easier for someone who plays the guitar, because you're always sitting thinking in terms of vocals and music at the same time. But he has a lot of good instrumental ideas."

"All I can say is that Tom Brumley's playing on the Stone Canyon Band albums is practically faultless. OK? And now on to Steve Love. Of course you all know that he was the bass player in Roger McGuinn's band that came over this summer and delighted Hyde Park, but before that and before the Stone Canyon Band, I had thought that he was in the excellent and much under-rated New York band, Stories, a band which also featured the talents of Michael Brown, an ordinary name, but an extraordinary talent when you know that he wrote 'Walk Away Renee' and 'Pretty Ballerina', and was leader of the legendary and fabulous Left Banke. Rick didn't think that Steve was in Stories, but I've found a picture of them, and the guy with the moustache in the front there looks pretty much like the same Steve Love, but on a cold and windy day. Anyone with any more definite information, please let me know, and you should check out the Left Banke (on Philips) and Stories (on Kama Sutra).

Now, the record. I thought it might be a nice idea to ring up the mysterious Rocky Prior, and ask him which tracks were his favourites on these last two albums, and I've incorporated his comments with mine. 'Let It Bring You Along' was written by Steve Love, and there doesn't seem to be any Tom Brumley in evidence, unless the dual lead guitar thing at the end has a steel as one of its parts. The song is average, but hots up a lot when the guitar solo comes in. It's as if someone shoved a red hot poker up A. Kemp. Then there's the title track, which should have been a hit single here, but just failed to make the top thirty, despite almost ceaseless radio play for several weeks. The song should be well known to all, but I'd like to point out the very direct mention of Chuck Berry, looking and playing just about the same as he did fifteen years before. Is this progress, I ask myself? Much of the rest of the album consists of good but undistinguished songs, with the instrumental side of things making more waves than the singing, which isn't bad, but doesn't have a lot to work with. 'So Long Mama', for instance, has some good steel, as usual, 'I Wanna Be With You', written by Kemp and the now

departed Meisner, is all right, but no more, and 'Are You Really Real?' has wood flute, whatever that is, played by Don Nelson, who may be a relation, but then again, may not. Rocky noted that Rick uses what he called 'John Lennon echo' on his voice, and that's right. Very odd. Side two begins with 'I'm Talkin' About You' from that very same C. Berry, and you'll recall that the same song, but in a different version, was on 'Spotlight On Rick', which we discussed in the last issue. This time, it's a long song, and it's played rather like The Who might do it, which I'm sure you'll agree can't be bad. Oh, but the drumming's not too much like that nice Mr Moon. In fact, it's a rather impressive track, and the next one, 'Nighttime Lady', a Nelson composition, ends up somewhat the same way, although it's a bit ordinary for a start. After that, 'A Flower Opens Gently By' and 'Don't Let Your Goodbye Stand', which are both enormously unwieldy and unlikely titles, don't really get one leaping about, and 'Palace Guard', the follow-up single to 'Garden Party', makes it as an

incredible! Just super musicians, and singers—that was my main worry, that I'd fail to vocally be able to match was was going on.

"What happened with the old group, was that they started a group, and they split up within a matter of weeks. I can't blame them for wanting to start one, but it's a difficult thing to keep everybody together and happy. I guess they were feeling neglected. They reached a point where they couldn't really go any farther, and they weren't that happy with what we were playing. It was actually a thing that I could feel was happening, and I was about at the stage of expecting a split. But things always work out for the better, and I'm much happier musically, and everyone's really into what we're playing. The old group went as far as we could go, and all of a sudden that was it. The only thing that worried me was that they left when they knew there were some gigs coming up in ten days, but they put it to me on the basis that they would try to work around their dates if I couldn't find anybody . . . so I just found somebody."



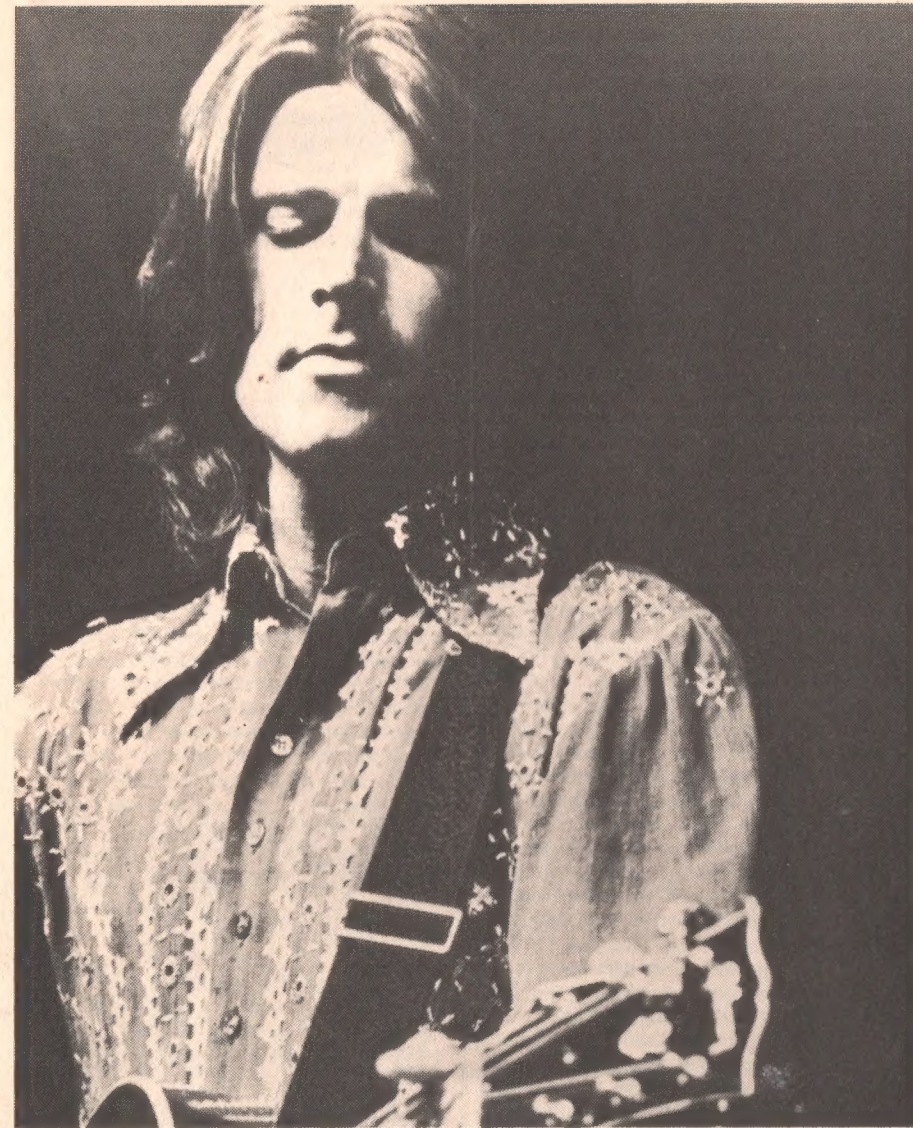
STONE CANYON BAND. L-R: Tom Brumley, Steve Love, Rick Nelson, Pat Shanahan, Allen Kemp

album track, but is about as commercial as Michael Nesmith, if you see what I mean. And 'Don't Let Your Goodbye Stand' was written by Richard Stekol, who Rocky thinks is an obscure American poet. Rocky also feels that this album, coming as it did off a big single, at least in the States, was rather an anti-climax, and I think he's very probably right there. Back to Rick, talking about the gap between the 'Garden Party' single and the album which eventually emerged.

"It really was a long time—I got caught in a trap almost, because 'Garden Party' really took off before I expected it to. When the album did come out, it was like an old album, because it was so long after the single (album released late 1972). And then the old group decided to leave. They had been talking about it, and they wanted to form their own group, all except Tom. Tom was very happy with what we were playing. I've always let them do what they want to do, and it was a mutual agreement kind of thing, no hard feelings or anything. It happened just before the album came out, and it could have been very difficult to promote the album, but I got together the new band in about three days. It was

WINDFALL

And now we're as up to date as we're going to get. 'Windfall' was released in the States in late 1973, and here about last April or May. It features an almost totally new Stone Canyon Band, Tom Brumley being the only one, apart from Rick himself, to stay. So the first thing to talk about is the band. Rick: "I just really lucked out this time. It started with Dennis Larden, the guitar player, who is really inventive and really a good songwriter. The bass player is Jay White (J. DeWitt White) and Ty Grimes is the drummer. They're not from anywhere specific, but they knew each other and had played together before, on club dates and stuff. What usually happens is that you meet one guy, and he'll know a couple of other people that are friends of his, that he's played with. So that's what happened. We were playing a date at the Houston Astrodome. It's kinda frightening anyway, just to drive by there. It's so huge . . . I mean, everybody'll say 'Oh, that's really big,' but you can't believe it—you're like a little speck. So that was the next date, and we just *had* to get it together. We had a week and a half between that and trying to get the band together, so



it was kind of thrown together, but everybody really came through.

"I met Dennis through a fellow named Michael Sherman, who is now a freelance writer, although he was working at MCA at the time. He'd heard Dennis playing a couple of sessions. So Dennis and I got together, and then we talked about these other people. Tom Brumley, though is a very important part of the whole thing. If Tom had left, I would have really been in trouble. What's happened now is that these guys are musically so good, and Tom helps Dennis a lot, and Dennis helps Tom a lot, and it's really a good working thing. Tom was very country oriented, and on this new album, we've kind of taken it a step further, because the steel is so versatile that it doesn't have to be relegated to country. I'm really happy with it, and it's really helped Tom's playing a lot, listening to Dennis. They worked out a lot of things together. And what's really great is that everybody's working for the same thing now. It's not a question of one guy wants to do this, the other wants to do that—they're really happy playing what we're playing."

The gripe about this album is that in its American version, the words were on the back of the sleeve in the lovely Mrs Nelson's tasty writing. For no good reason that I'm aware of, we didn't get them here, but otherwise, the sleeve is pretty nice. And the record—well, it sure isn't another 'Rudy The Fifth', unfortunately, but it's quite

acceptable. The band seem more together than their predecessors, said Rocky, and it does show through. What we have here is patchy material, but very well played. Dennis Larden, as well as being a good guitarist, is also a songwriter, and while it would be wrong to call him a great writer at this

point, he did in fact write five and a half songs of the ten on the album, including the best two, or even three, which are 'Legacy', 'Don't Leave Me Here' and 'One Night Stand'. Is he taking over from you in the songwriting field, Rick? "He wrote the majority, but for me, it wasn't a question of taking over. I think in the long run it's going to be an addition, and it has relieved me of the pressure of having to come up with ten songs, which I like, and it leads to more variety, which is a good thing."

'Legacy' is actually brilliant. Rocky reckons it's one of the very best songs Nelson has ever recorded, feeling that this kind of easy-going, chugalong song is what Rick does best, a sentiment with which I totally agree. Notice also the lovely falling passage played on the steel guitar. Indeed a goodie. 'Someone To Love' demonstrates that Rick isn't quite so good on a boogie, and the whole track, complete with fuzz guitar and fuzz steel is a bit over-heavy. 'How Many Times' is Jay White's song, and in all honesty, it gets a bit tedious by the end. 'Evil Woman Child' is the one where Tom Brumley plays lead, although it sounds like a regular guitar. It's a Latinish track, which Rick felt was something like 'Hello Mary Lou', but unfortunate-

ly, it doesn't seem to be in the same league to me. Much better is the majestic beauty of 'Don't Leave Me Here', and when you turn the record over, 'Wild Nights In Tulsa' is also good. A travel song, written by Don Burns and Ricky Wildflower(?), which might have been off those famed country albums. The single from this album was 'Lifestream', which Rocky feels was a mistake. It's not bad, very pleasant, typical mainstream country rock, and other epithets of that nature, but it really isn't a single, and the only reason it became a single was because it was one of the first of the tracks to be completed. 'One Night Stand' is again very good, and again could have been on the country albums, but 'I Don't Want To Be Lonely Tonight', which is Baker Knight's return to writing for Rick, is unfortunately not really up to his best. Finally, the title track, 'Windfall', isn't that hot either. It's a track with all sorts of percussion instruments, which sounds as though it could have come off that previously mentioned Millennium album, where there's a very similar track called 'The Island'. And all that adds up to a somewhat unsatisfactory, but nevertheless reasonable album.

BITS

Just before we wind this all up, a few more things that came out of the interviews. Let's start with acting. Rick has made appearances in 'The Streets Of San Francisco', as a murderer, in 'Marshall' as a rapist, in 'McCloud' as a murderer/rock'n'roll singer (they also played 'Garden Party' in that one, which may have assisted in the song's success), and he wants to do some more acting, although he's not actively searching for it. On 'Hello Mary Lou':—"It's good not to feel that I necessarily have to play that to walk out of the building." On the changes since he started out:—"What's happened is that musically there are so many better musicians now. When I started, there were four or five lead guitar players that you could name that were contributing anything, and now there's just so many really great musicians. It's very easy to end up on the outside of that, rather than really dive into it. Because that's who the competition is—I'm in competition with everybody. To get to the point of it, I have to at least come up to that standard of playing, and I can't afford to fall back on the old songs if I want to progress."

END

All right, that's it, I've finished. Just before I go, thanks to the following:

Peter Robinson and Geoff Thorn of MCA in England.

Bill Yaryan of MCA in Los Angeles, or wherever he is now.

Sandy Friedman of Rogers, Cowan and Brenner, in Beverly Hills.

Rocky Prior for lending me his records, giving me his opinions, and badgering me into doing the interviews.

Willie Nelson (Rick's cousin and manager). Ray McCarthy for the loan of his records. And of course, to Rick Nelson.

Latest news is that Ty Grimes left the Stone Canyon Band to join the Captain in the Magic Band, and was replaced by Richie Hayward when it was thought that Little Feat were on the way out. Now that Lowell and the boys are getting to be stars, Rick probably doesn't have him any more. Additionally, there hasn't been anything else released since 'Windfall'. It would be nice to think that this article might at least indicate that someone somewhere cares.

□ JOHN TOBLER

REDWING

THEIR UNLAMENTED PAST, EASYGOING PRESENT AND EVER-HOPEFUL FUTURE

Redwing are a band from Sacramento, North California, which, although it is the States capital is, I can assure West-Coast freaks, **not** the sort of place a hip rock-band admits too readily to come from and still live in.

Knowing how neglected they'd been in almost every rock paper, I decided to take a break from my holiday in San Francisco and Berkeley and track them down.

"You're doing an interview with who?"

"Redwing."

"Who?"—was the typical Bay Area reaction from people living literally a few hours' drive away from Redwing's permanent home-base. With no knowledge of Dutch I would almost certainly have got further in that conversation in any respectable music club in Holland—but then the land of tulips has been turned on to country music and to so-called 'country rock' for years. It is doubtful if the reaction here at home would have been much different from that I received in Berkeley—Redwing's only UK tour was three years ago, and although it went quite well, it didn't exactly set the old country alight to a Redwing fever. Their second album hasn't been released here ("It's good that it hasn't been" as one of the band put it) and their third was a typical EMI effort—chuck 'em all out and see if, with a great slice of luck, it stays on the top or sinks like a stone. Their fourth album has just been released in the States and coupled with the exciting possibility of a visit before the end of the year the time seems right to have a look back at their career.

LOOKING BACK

For the band it's been a long, tedious slog—the nucleus of the band have been together for about twelve years, and they've never exactly acted out the big star trip—they reckoned they've probably never stayed at a Holiday Inn in their lives. They now feel a lot wiser about the music business, well hardened, and perhaps a little bitter, and you'll no doubt appreciate why and probably agree with them as you read their story. I did the interview on a typical hot (100°) August Sacramento afternoon, with **Tom Phillips** who plays guitars and pedal steel and **George Hullin** the drummer. The rest of the present group are Ron Floegel (guitars) and Andrew Samuels (guitars). The day I spoke with them was their last gig with John Myers on bass, and their present bassist is Buddy Harfrum, a local Sacramento musician.

ZZ: I think the best thing is to start right at the beginning and tell me how you all got together.

Tom: That's a long way, a long way. From the very beginning? Ron [Floegel] and I and a fellow named Tim Schmit started out a group together in high school—a folk group,

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non-electric. Then in the latter part of high school George (Hullin) came along and we got electric guitars and he was the drummer. We found ourselves more or less on the Beach Boys thing—surf music—and played school dances—\$30 a time.

ZZ: What year was that?

Tom: About 1964. We were called The Contenders—we didn't write anything ourselves.

THE NEW BREED

George: In 1965 we met a local producer and made our first record and changed our name to The New Breed. It was really a hit record to a certain extent; everywhere it was released and distributed it was a number one—mostly in California. The record company was in LA, called Diplomacy—it was really a fly-by-night situation and when it came time for them to sell the record to a larger label who could distribute it, they didn't, so hence the record died, but it got us off the ground and got us playing all over California, and we went on to make an album after that that wasn't released. Then we went to Mercury and had one single out. After that we formed our own label called World United Records. We figured we would distribute in California as well as anybody else, so . . .

ZZ: Did it work out?

George: No—well the records weren't too good.

ZZ: What sort of band was The New Breed? Was it significant that you'd changed your name from The Contenders?

George: Well it was a slow transition in the music.

Tom: We moved into the same areas as The Beau Brummels, the Vejtables, The Mojo Men.

ZZ: Sort of Englished influenced by then?

George: Yeah—the Beatles definitely, but basically we were doing our own stuff.

GLAD

George: We had these two singles on our label and we sold the second single to Hanna-Barbera, the cartoon people, and they released it. They didn't do anything with it; then we met up with a guy from around here who started working down at Sunset Sound Records in LA as an engineer and he got in tight with Terry Melcher, and so he brought us down and we signed with ABC—the label was called Equinox—it was Melcher's own label—a subsidiary of ABC. He changed our name to Never Mind, we made a record and he decided to call us Glad. This was 1969 and we had three singles with that name.

ZZ: None of them did anything?

Tom: Bomb, bomb, bomb!

George: That was another experience—we went down there and recorded an album by

ourselves and came back and found full orchestration on it, oboes, flutes, french horns etc. They completely screwed us up and we didn't have any creative control over it at all. We were really frustrated after that.

ZZ: Was this about the time Tim left—late '69?

Tom: Yeah—we had moved to LA to record the album and when we were down there we went over and met Richie [Furay], and Poco—Jim Messina and those guys. Some girls that we knew who knew Poco said they were looking for a bass player, so Tim said why don't we go over there and I'll pretend like I'm looking for a job. It was only for a kick—we went over there and met them and Tim played bass and they really loved it, so it took a period of time, months, for him to leave, for the transition.

ZZ: Why exactly did Tim leave—was it because he was pissed off with the way everything was going or just because he couldn't miss an opportunity like Poco?

Tom: Well, like there was nothing really happening with us—he really had a rough time deciding whether to go. He didn't want to leave us but there was this opportunity to go with the old Buffalo Springfield.

George: And we were broke. He was more broke than any of us at the time. We probably made more money in our early days than we are making in this period we're talking about now—it was really hard. But at least we were still managing to make records and that's been the one element you have to maintain, you have to make records and that's what kept us going all these years. So after the ABC thing blew up and Tim was thinking about going with Poco, we decided to add Andrew [Samuels] and ironically the same day Andrew decided to join us, that was the last time we saw Tim and he went to LA—called us and told us he'd decided to change.

THE BIRTH OF REDWING

And hence in early 1970, Redwing was born. Now they were left with Ron on guitars, George on drums, Tom on guitars and his recent addition of a pedal steel which he'd bought ironically after hearing Rusty Young's at the same LA jam that had started Tim's decision to leave, plus a new lead guitarist, Andrew Samuels, and no bassist. Also, up till then, Tim had done most of the lead vocals, and had almost been the focal point of the group, at least on stage. Andrew was also from Sacramento and had played lead for Nate Shiner's Blues Band. It took almost a year of hard rehearsing in George's garage for Andrew's blues backgrounds, Tom's new country inclination, and Ron and George's rock backgrounds to coalesce into a Redwing sound.

George: We made a kitchen tape in our garage on a simple 2-track machine. It wasn't too bad—we took it around to different people and a few of them were interested, but then a lucky break happened—we had a loan given to us for about \$16,000 and we decided to finance a whole album ourselves and take the master, a finished product around, and that's what we proceeded to do. We went to Wally Heider's where we met Russ Gary who wanted to produce it, and we went ahead and finished the first album and took it round every label. Because of their location (Berkeley) and because they offered us the best deal, we chose to sign with Fantasy, and they released our first album.

ZZ: How did that loan come about?

George: Well, it was a friend of Andrew's brother, a girl from Davis [the local university of California campus town]—she was about 22 at the time and she had a large trust fund and we heard she was going to invest in some promotion thing, so we went to her and said, "Look, would you invest in us," and she said she would. That was probably the biggest lucky break we've ever got. There were three or four other companies vying for the contract, but we got a large amount of front money from Fantasy in consideration of what most groups get, and we got a good percentage rate: it's a really good recording contract.



FIRST ALBUM

If any of you have read the liner-notes on the first album, 'REDWING' (United Artists UAS 29188) you will know that part of Fantasy's keenness to sign the band was due to the enthusiasm of Ralph J. Gleason, and, in fact, he still likes to keep an interest in the band and generally has overall charge of them at the Fantasy end.

On this first album Redwing's constant problem with a bassist was solved by Andrew playing most of the bass parts. Although Russ Gary (Creedence's producer) is credited with co-production, George states that he was acting much more in the role of an engineer. The album, if you have the misfortune of not hearing it (and I can only suggest it is well worth investing in, if you see it in the deletion racks) is really excellent. The distinctive vocals on most tracks are by Ron Floegel—he's responsible for nearly all the words, with Tom, Andrew and Ron providing the music. The only tracks not written by the band are Mickey Newbury's '(Tell Me Baby) Why You Been Gone So Long', and the first single off the album, Jimmie Roger's 'California Blues', which they still often close their first set with. The second single, 'I'm Your Lover Man', is still an essential record for all parties. Try and hear the album.

It was recorded at the end of 1970—Redwing signed with Fantasy in December, and the album was released in May 1971. George: Fantasy were quite interested in us and they did a pretty nice promotion thing on us, considering the amount of money they spend on their other acts. The album received a lot of great reviews, got played a lot, and the single jumped right off. Drake [the owner of a nationwide network of radio stations] was behind it, but for some reason it just didn't sell. People have been trying to figure out why, but it doesn't matter any more I guess. We did get a lot of recognition however.

Fantasy also financed a whole European tour later that year with Redwing co-headlining with Alice Stuart, which was quite successful for a first tour by a new unknown American band.

SECOND PHASE

The situation looked fairly healthy—a foothold in Europe, a fairly successful initial album, and a gig situation at home which was just about OK. So now was the time for a follow-up album to really build on their position. But things were not to be that simple. Firstly there was their problem with finding a bassist. At the start it had been mutually decided that Andrew Samuels should fill in on bass to replace Tim Schmit, but Andrew is basically a lead guitarist, so they chose instead to use a number of different bassists on live gigs, but let Andrew lay down the bass tracks on the first album. Thus started the search for a permanent bassist which to date, about four years later, has still not definitely been resolved: During this time the band has been through probably five bassists, altogether, all unsatisfactory for the band's requirements. When they went into the studio in 1971 to



record the second album 'WHAT THIS COUNTRY NEEDS' (Fantasy 9405 Import), they used Dale Lyberger, the bassist who had accompanied them on their European tour, on some of the tracks, but a lot of the work was done by their old mate Tim Schmit. The album, again produced by Russ Gary, is probably the weakest of the four so far (hence Tom's quote earlier) and the band were all fairly disappointed with it. They put a lot of the blame at Russ Gary's door, freely admitting though, that there were other factors involved. The band's situation at the time obviously required an album but they didn't have many new songs ready, so they recorded what they were playing live in clubs, hence the inclusion of Rufus Thomas's 'Walking The Dog', and Berry's 'Oh Carol', and 'Bye Bye Johnny', making the album very much rock orientated.

Although I find a couple of the songs

weak, Tom argues that the songs were OK, but that it was the sound quality that made the record so unsatisfactory. Nevertheless that distinctive raw rocking sound of the first album with its country tinge is still very present, and I would imagine that if you think the first album is a near-classic (as I'm inclined to do) you'll probably be more than interested in the second.

At the time of recording Russ Gary was heavily involved with other work, like Alice Stuart's new album and an album with John Fogerty, and subsequently gave Redwing insufficient assistance. Coupled with this, Redwing were allocated to the now defunct Studio 'A' in the Fantasy complex which George graphically describes as "a lemon studio". Also, Fantasy were disappointed and did hardly anything to promote it, which in fairness is to a certain extent understandable, particularly as promotion is not something Fantasy are heavily into.

George: The second album hurt us and we've been trying to get going again ever since.



COUNTRY MUSIC MAKES IT EVERY TIME

Between the second and third album, 'TAKE ME HOME' (Fantasy F-9439), Redwing limped along with just enough gigs in North California to survive. In 1973 their manager for eight years, Gary Schiro, committed suicide after problems at home, their bassist Dale Lyberger left, and they also got rid of Russ Gary as producer. They'd decided that on their third album they would have total control, and during this time, as is obvious from this album, the band became much more influenced by country music, both George and Andrew having long since completely shed any early antipathy.

The material on the album ranges from bluegrass and country ballads to hefty rock, and most of the songs evolved in the studio, very few of them ever being played onstage. It was probably Tom's influence which was most important in the new country emphasis in their music. Besides his constant listening to Merle Haggard, Tom had been picking up on country guitarists like Jerry Reed and Chet Atkins, prior to recording, and it was Reed who strongly influenced his style on the instrumentals. Tom picked up the instrumental, 'Katy Warren Break-down', from an album by fifties country-picker and LA session musician Joe Maphis (see John Tobler's articles on Rick Nelson). Incidentally, Maphis' son Jody now plays drums with the Earl Scruggs Revue. The only other track not written by one of the group is 'Lowdown

Samuel', which an A&R man at Fantasy just brought along to the session, and as the group liked it, they recorded it.

Fantasy were preparing to look at this third album very carefully, after the way the second had turned out, but were quite surprised by the change in style and had to agree the production was vastly improved over the second. But all the same, the company had no real experience of handling music of this type, and again promotion was very obviously lacking—they didn't even carry out the almost crucial first piece of promotion needed in the US—of extracting a single. Fantasy were now looked after by EMI in this country who duly released the album, no doubt selling a couple of copies. The sleeve on this album seems worth a mention, done as usual by Tony Lane using an illustration by Charles Shields—it's a tasteful, I suppose almost 'impressionist' picture of an imaginary landscape, but it seems to fit the music perfectly.

DEAD OR ALIVE?

They now had a third album under their belt, one with which the band were very pleased at the time, especially as it had all been their own work and quite a while in the making, with a fair number of good reviews. But gigs were still no more than usual—mostly limited to California, and usually only placed within a few hours drive of Sacramento. They had no way of getting on a proper US concert tour—Fantasy weren't going to promote one, the band didn't have any dubious contacts in high places, and unless you get a contract with a big booking agency in the US you have to stay local. Their one success story continued though—they had another European tour fixed. Plans were made to try and include Britain in the tour, but the energy crisis hit that idea on the head, and so they only played on the Continent, mainly Holland, again to enthusiastic and slowly growing audiences.

Back in the States early this summer they started work on their fourth album 'DEAD OR ALIVE' (Fantasy F-9459). Tom Phillips was again the predominant influence, contributing seven out of the ten songs. The group had decided that the last album must



have been too country for the market (as it didn't sell nearly as well as they had hoped), so subconsciously Tom made an effort not to let the rock get swamped by country influences on this one. Also, Tom's listening, as always confined to musicians rather than to bands, now included some of the old jazz guitarists of the fifties, in particular Howard Roberts and Barney Kessel. Tom had found Howard Roberts especially instructive, having attended a guitar workshop he had held locally. These people's riffs, plus some of the guitar work of Rob Ford from Tom Scott's LA Express (whom Tom had seen on the Joni Mitchell tour—one of his rare visits to somebody else's gigs), seemed to be occurring in Redwing's daily rehearsal sessions in George's garage.

The album, except for the obvious 'Country Music Makes It Every Time', is somewhat less country-flavoured than the last, and I suppose, for want of any other description, is slightly more commercial. I find I already enjoy the album quite a lot at a superficial level—for its songs, but it hasn't really started giving me any of that more rewarding musical satisfaction I expect from a really good album yet. The album was again produced by the band, but an LA producer, John Boylan, lent a hand (Fantasy had brought Boylan up to Berkeley to produce the first album for a new discovery of theirs, Michael Dinner, and if you see a copy of his album, 'The Great Pretender', an import—F-9454—grab a listen because it's got some really good stuff on it, and Dinner writes some

great wry lyrics, especially for a nineteen year old). Boylan, who's produced Linda Ronstadt albums and been around country-rock production for a long while (again see John Tobler's Rick Nelson piece in ZZ No.46 for one example), came in from a break with Dinner and listened to Redwing and liked what he heard. Fantasy, who these days seem to be much more concerned about the production standard of their product, suggested Boylan gave the group the benefit of his ideas, which was mutually agreed upon. Basically, he agreed with what they had already done, but added a few hints on a couple of tracks. Fantasy being keen, it seems there's quite a good chance he'll produce Redwing's fifth which they should be starting at the end of this year.

UP AND AWAY?

The band are hoping Fantasy will give 'DEAD OR ALIVE' some much needed promotion. However, the problem is with the company, as they have never really found the need to do this. The majority of Fantasy's output is jazz, which is not stuff that particularly benefits from, or really requires, a lot of pushing. Their previous main experience with rock was, of course, Creedence, and it just so happened that they were such an instant smash they never needed heavy promotion to launch them either, so as George rightly pointed out, Fantasy have never felt it to be necessary, so they probably see little reason to start now. Which doesn't console Redwing much, as they feel that by and large their music has been worthy of much more attention than it's received (as I do and various others such as Ralph Gleason and Jerry Gilbert). Their long experience in rock has taught them a lot of things. Firstly, they now manage their affairs totally by themselves, with little effort, but complete control. As George said, because they've been mucked around in the past by the Diplomacy's and the Equinoxes of this world, he's bitter enough not to bother to listen to AM radio and the hits they never got, but should have. Their most heartening prospects for the future are firstly their upcoming probable tour of Europe, and, commercially, even brighter, the fact that at last they have a contract with a nationwide booking agency which should ensure the beginning of gigs across the States.

I was lucky enough to catch them at a small open-air gig in a little town up in the mountains north-east of Sacramento. I can tell you, if you want to dance and hear great music as well (count the bands that **truly** provide both), then Redwing is your band. Remember—you're meant to dance—miss them this time at your peril.

DISCOGRAPHY

ALBUMS:

- 1971 'REDWING' (UK United Artists UAS 29188/US Fantasy 8409)
- 1972 'WHAT THIS COUNTRY NEEDS' (US Fantasy 9405)
- 1973 'TAKE ME HOME' (UK Fantasy (EMI)/US Fantasy F-9439)
- 1974 'DEAD OR ALIVE' (US Fantasy F-9459)

SINGLES:

- 1971 'California Blues'/'Dark Thursday' (UK United Artists UP 357??/US Fantasy ????)
- 1971 'I'm Your Lover Man'/'Bonnie Bones' (UK United Artists UP 35295/US ????)

□ STEVE ALLEN

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GETTIN' A BIT INTIMATE 'ERE I DUNNO IF ZIGZAG CAN TAKE ALL THIS KEITH RICHARD

A very wrecked little chit-chat with Keith Richards about (amongst other things) Rastafarians, Haile Selassie, Jamaican whore-houses, drugs, sex, the Ronettes, 'It's Only Rock'n'Roll', Phil Spector, Little Richard, Jack Nitzsche . . . oh yeah and Chuck Berry.

We had to leave out the one about one of the Stones' wives being raped in a Jamaican hotel—Keith wanted it off the record—but otherwise it's pretty much all here. The interview was done about an hour before our Keith's legendary appearance on 'The Old Grey Whistle Test', the events of which are worth a sizeable feature in themselves.

NK: Yeah, well 'It's Only Rock'n'Roll' but I like it.

KR: Right, well first off we had to put that particular track out as a single. In all honesty . . . well you probably know the story already . . . the track itself was originally recorded at Ronnie Wood's

place with Mick, Ronnie and Kenny Jones

NK: Wasn't Bowie somewhere in there as well?

KR: (with intoned derisive sneer): Only hand-clappin'. And we even wiped 'em off and overdubbed new ones (laughs). Anyway Mick took the track down to Munich and when I heard it I thought great, y'know . . . I just felt that it said what it had to say very well, what with everybody running around trying to write the definitive rock'n'roll song. It was put very simply and directly. So we immediately set about re-recording it but the problem was that Kenny Jones in fact had done a great take-off of Charlie's drumming which, for that number, even surpassed Charlie himself. So Charlie had to do a take-off of Kenny Jones doing a take-off of him and ended up so paranoid about it that I decided to leave the original track on. We ended up constructing the

whole song around Kenny's sessions and he came over and laid down a bass-track.

NK: There's a lot of you on that number, right.

KR: Yeah, three or four guitar overdubs at least. Mick T's not on it at all. Mick J's playing one guitar and I think Ronnie's playing an acoustic.

NK: One presumes you're playing all those guitars on 'Fingerprint File', as well.

KR: I'll surprise you. I'm just playing the Superfly 'wah-wah' stuff. Mick (Jagger)'s playing the rhythm guitar. He's so good now it almost frightens me. (laughs) Yeah . . . Mick T on bass, Bill on synthesizer—that low growling sound. Actually we were lucky in that during the sessions we got hold of that machine (pause) it looks like those bathroom scales . . . I think it's called a 'Hi-Fi' and it gets all these great sounds out of the guitars. The real battle these days y'see is to keep the raw quality—that raunch sound you can get naturally from

a decent guitar and keep it on the tape itself throughout the whole mixing process. I mean all that shit with 'Dolbys' and what-have-you. Those things just sterilise the good gritty rock'n'roll sound right out of existence.

NK: Charlie really shines on the new tracks. KR: Oh yeah definitely. I'd go as far as to say that this could well be Charlie's finest hour . . .

NK: It was the pair of you who in fact worked out that Caribbean beat for 'Luxury', right?

KR: Yeah, well first off, that is a bona fide reggae 'on-beat' being played there, no matter what anyone may tell you. The song's mine basically. It all came about while I was driving from the Munich Hilton to the studios, fxxked right out of my head and the radio was playing this soul number which I still don't know the title of but it had this chord sequence . . . and it turned out later

as 'Luxury'. I just played it as a straight rock'n'roll thing until Charlie turned the beat around and it all fell spontaneously right into place with Mick getting into that whole West Indian bit etc. etc. That really is a prime typical Stones track in the way that it fell together by accident. I mean, that's how you get influenced. It's a process of slow assimilation, not like everyone expected when we actually went to Jamaica to record 'Goat's Head Soup' that we'd suddenly leap into doing reggae. I actually got very much into playing West Indian guitar with the Rastafarians when I was out there though. I used to play for hours and hours. This wasn't reggae—more these ethnic chants which are basically African but have this strong injection of a kind of Southern Baptist spiritualist feel.

NK: Like 'River of Babylon'?

KR: Yeah but . . . I mean, Christ there are so many of 'em. For a start I'd say

definitely that Jamaica is now the most musically-oriented country in the world. Far more so than Africa. This is the thing y'see, that most of these chants have never been recorded. It got so good at one point that I loaded all their gear—these drums and some amps of mine—into a Range Rover and took 'em all down to Dynamic Sounds in Jamaica to record. Ultimately I realised that they were pretty much totally inhibited by all the machinery in the studio so the next time—and this is going to be my big mission—I'm going to do it right, which is to take the equipment to them. Also, it'll be interesting to find out just how many of the band are still alive or out of jail.

NK: Didn't Anita get busted while you were over there?

KR: Yeah but that was a big protocol number because we were living in a heavy upper-class white area and at the same



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time having all these Rastas staying with us. She spent three days in jail just because she didn't understand the great English plan there. The set-up was of course the grass which belonged to the Rastas really. Anyway we bailed her out with 600 dollars and were told to keep out, not for good, but for a while. Still, all the more reason to go back, I say. I've bought Tommy Steele's house over there, by the way. (laughs)

NK: The Rasta obsession with Haile Selassie.

KR: Ah, it's interesting you mentioned that 'cos I'd be most intrigued to find out exactly how they regard Selassie right at this moment. I mean the whole Rasta thing is not deeply spiritual or anything though it's getting incredibly widespread what with all these kids rebelling from school and growing their locks. Actually there is this weird pecking order which is based solely around the length of the hair and beard, the thing being that the longer the locks the more revered that figure is. And I mean, they give you this long heavy rap about Selassie being 'the King of Kings' and that but it's all based around the music and the grass which is the best anywhere. So fresh... very nice. Part of my religion (laughs). But you'd think in that climate it would just wipe you right out, but it ultimately has the same effect that those great 'up'-Mexican grasses have which culminates in this great energy rush. I mean I've seen cocaine just evaporate, it's so hot there and smack would just floor you completely.

NK: Jamaica is notorious for doing lavish rip-off numbers on naive foreigners.

KR: I was fortunate in that respect in that they dug the way I played and pretty much accepted me. Sure, there was the occasional hassle for the extra ten dollars. I paid the Rastas for the session work

they did. In fact it got to the point where they laid this great honour on me when they left their drums at my house.

NK: Those goat-skin efforts?

KR: The small ones are made out of goatskin yeah, but the big ones are made out of cow-skin. Like I said, the music isn't anything near reggae. For a start the pulse of the music is set against the human heart-beat and embellished with all these chants.

NK: Did you hear that 'Count Osi and his Mystic Revelations' album?

KR: Yeah that's maybe an approximation of it but it's still no way the real thing. I remember seeing the Wailers at the Speakeasy trying to do a couple of those chants and it was just like Millie doing it. I mean, just me playin' with 'em is a bastardisation really.

NK: You just play rhythm work, right?

KR: Yeah, this sort of funky, chicken-scratch riffing, throwing in some tasty chords now and then to flesh out the harmonies in the chants. In the end, I imagine the finished product will have the same import as Brian's 'JouJouka' project. This time I'm going to make it a sort of field expedition with Marshall (Chess). I've realised you've got to be careful about being too friendly with the Rastas unfortunately, simply because there'll be another whole bust scene.* I don't think it's so much being accepted or not, although they guy Rufus who's a spade and who was with us was rejected because he was a fag. Jamaicans are very heterosexual y'see. It's all "get down woman"—that totally chauvinistic thing. There's no going down on chicks either—no kinky reggae there, mate (Laughs). You can go to the scuzziest whore-house on the island and you ask some chick to do that an' she'll kick you out straight away. They have these 'pink-houses'—that's what they're called

—for the sailors.

NK: Do they have a great hang-up for white chicks?

KR: Well, no worse than some white guys have for black chicks. Um-m-m-m... like when I was... uh knocking off Ronnie Spector back in the old days. You grow out of it. (Pause) Gettin' a bit intimate 'ere. I dunno if ZigZag can take all this! (Laughs)

NK: Did you see the Ronettes when they were here recently?

KR: Yeah... it was great. Ronnie looked better than ever, y'know—at least I thought so. I never liked those bee-hive hairstyles though myself.

NK: I thought it was a drag that she kept putting down her ex-husband.

KR: Yeah but she wants to put Phil Spector down **so-a** bad.

NK: Obviously, but I've read that he was particularly distraught about the whole break-up scene?

KR: Well, Phil Spector is, was and always will be a complete weirdo. From 'To Know Him Is To Love Him' onwards. I mean, I used to hand around with Ronnie back then. She was really Phil's girl of course, he being that colossal Svengali-figure. But still, I mean, when Mick and I got to New York, first thing we'd do is get a cab down to Harlem—127th Avenue, it was, and... uh... 'get it on', so to speak. But at the same time we'd be recording with Jack Nitzsche who we all know was Phil's arranger. And Phil would be there hiding somewhere in the studio just **glowering** at me. He's just a very, very jealous guy.

NK: What's Jack Nitzsche like? He's

Footnote:

*The rest of Jamaica is both contemptuous and also totally shit-scared of the Rasta movement.



"I don't know, man, but I've listened to a lot of music, and I reckon that my records are definitely better, more stimulating, and more carefully constructed than any others. I've studied the melodies and lyrical forms of many artists, but no-one else quite seems to sustain the burning intensity of my own work."

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something of an enigma obviously.
 KR: Oh he's just this **obsessive** . . . beautiful . . . freak. That's it. He's always got these amazing obsessions. Like he was into karate and the whole Kung-Fu thing years and years ago. He's like Brian in a way—an American Brian Jones if you like. These great spates of rampant irrationality. Always was a gas working with him though. I still remember playing 'Let's Spend The Night Together' on the piano using one finger—things like that. Personally I've always felt he was never given enough credit for his work with Spector. I mean, when you consider just how vital the arranger was to those productions. The need to understand spacings for the instruments and the weight of the sound itself. I mean and then again, Spector just hasn't done anything really since those days. What exactly has arisen from him hanging around New York with John Lennon? Or George Harrison for that matter? All those guys without bands are really lost as far as I'm concerned. I feel very sorry for 'em. I'd far rather see Spector reform the Teddy Bears. But then again American musicians are a race apart. The best are just so . . . obsessive. That's the only word that comes to mind. And that statement ties in with someone like Chuck Berry who is the **biggest cxxt** I've ever met. That's **on** the record by the way! He's also the most charming cxxt and I've got to like 'im for it all the same even if he's so tight he'll never ever get a half-way decent band together. Like, I did a radio interview with this guy recently who asked me about this statement that Bo Diddley made to the press which claimed that if he'd been white then

he'd be just as big as the Rolling Stones. That's crap though, because look, the Jackson 5 are bigger than us right now. It's all a question of ability to adapt. It's what happened to the blues guys and Christ, it is a fxxkin' tragedy when something like what happened when Junior Wells and Buddy Guy supported us on a European tour we'did several years ago and were always being booed off, occurs. In a way you've got to take Bo Diddley and Chuck Berry out of that thing though because they did adapt. Still it's a pretty sad indictment on the scene when Berry's biggest hit of all is just a wanker's song!

NK: Did the success of 'My Ding-a-Ling' personally depress you a lot?
 KR: Yeah . . . uh no, not really. I mean, he's always pulled that sort of novelty song bit out at certain junctures in his career. 'Anthony Boy' and . . . 'Broken Arrow', for example. And yeah, it's feeble but still he is trying to inject a certain amount of humour into rock and God know, it needs it right now. But I mean then again this is the man who wrote 'Carole' . . . 'Schooldays' . . . 'Let It Rock'.

NK: Did you ever hear 'Tulane' on that 'Back Home' album?
 KR: Right, yeah, that was great. There's another track on that album . . . something with 'Baby' in the title that had the spirit too. I tell you though if anyone has a copy of 'Run Rudolph Run', God, what I'd give for that!

NK: Talking of other artists, you'd been reputed to have had a few run-ins with various musicians. At one point you were supposed to have had a hate thing going

with Ry Cooder which was sorted out. Then a couple of years ago 'Rolling Stone' reported a feud going on between you and Stevie Wonder.

KR: I just don't know where it all comes from, y'know. I don't see how it could have possibly been though, 'cos on that last tour we had Trevor (Lawrence) and Steve (Maddao) from his old band playing with us. It's a very delicate thing—that's all I can say, really—and it's more to do with the people immediately surrounding Stevie. I don't want to get into it, but those people have a reason for

telling him what they tell him and having him believe what they want him to believe, because he can't see for himself. I love Stevie, though. I mean all I know is that at the end of the tour he personally gave me a silver necklace, and every time I've seen him, we've got on really well. I mean, we've even recorded together.

NK: Didn't you do a session once with Little Richard? That's another one from 'Rolling Stone's Random Notes section.
 KR: No, we've never recorded . . . oh, wait a minute we did have this amazing all-night rock'n'roll session once which was a gas. He even wore his whole lurex dress (laughs) and did all his old numbers. I mean, but it's so hard to get 'im to do anything beyond running around screaming "Shuddup . . . Shuddup". Christ, I even had to sit down at the piano myself at one point and bash out 'Miss Ann' missing half the beats until he'd had enough and kicked me off the stool, took over, and everyone went—"Shooo, thank God for that!"

☐ NICK KENT

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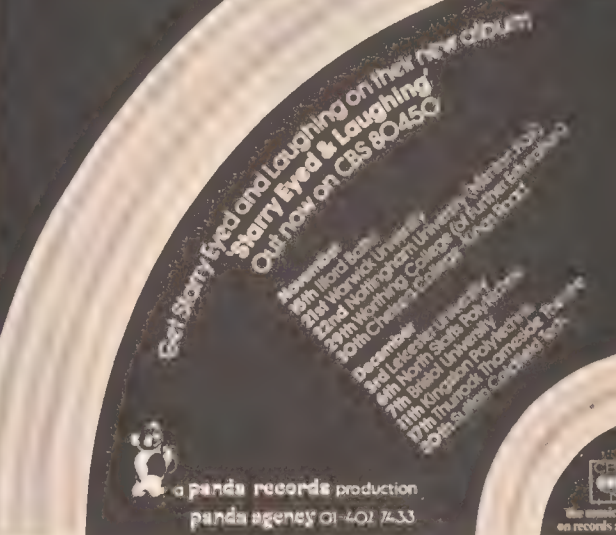
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THE BALLAD OF CHILLI WILLI AND THE RED HOT PEPPERS

Saturday, 8th June, 1974:

Not exactly the best gig I've seen the Willis play, but one that sticks out in my memory as being one of the most eventful. The venue was Oriol College, Oxford, a bastion of traditional education, and inhabited, it appears, by drongos who know as much about rock music as I do about brain surgery. But then that's typical of the sort of gig they've played time and time again, as much out of necessity as of a mischievous and healthy pre-occupation with the absurd and unexpected. Indoctrinating middle and upper class students to the pleasures of American country music is not the sort of task that can be taken too seriously if you're going to have any hope of retaining faith in human nature.

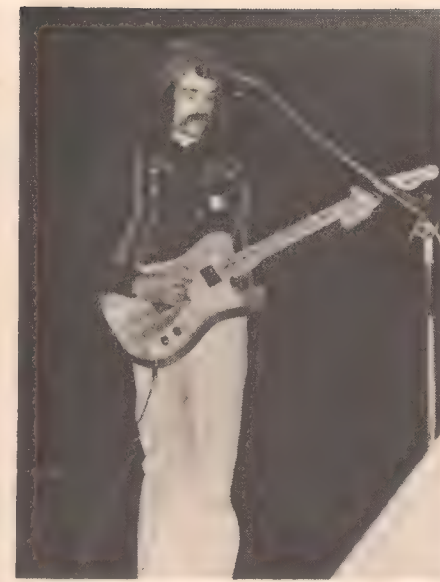
The occasion for this particular expedition is what Oriol College optimistically advertised as 'A Paradise Regained'... a May Ball (even though it's June). A chance for the local populace to forget their text

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books, dress up in their Sunday best, adopt their most sophisticated airs and graces, and then get pissed out of their brains and act the idiot. For the Willis it's yet another trek up yet another motorway to be hassled by yet another promoter who hasn't got a clue about what is and what should be happening. But knowing himself what **was** likely to happen. Jake, the Willis manager, had planned, with foresight and an admirable policy of mixing business with pleasure, to make the whole thing as much of a crazy, enjoyable party as possible. On the way there, spirits were, as usual, high. The shining white brand new 12-seater transit, already littered with beer-cans and other necessity left-overs, careered along the M4, Glen Colson at the wheel. 'Wild Tales', by Graham Nash on the 8-track, and a chaotic free-for-all discussion about what their forthcoming album should be called... 'Adolf's Up Your Bum', 'Blood On The Girdle', maybe even 'Bongos

Over Balham'. The whole mood for the day was established... weird, humorous, wild rock'n'roll madness. We arrived at the College at about 3pm and as the band weren't due to play until something like 2am in the morning it meant either waiting around in the dressing room watching TV, smoking and drinking, or venturing out into the town and taking in the local scenery. Most of us had plenty of time to do both, so it was later in the afternoon that a group of us, by now graced with the presence of Pete Frame replete with two cases of Newcastle Brown, made our way to the nearest cafe in Oxford. Our leisurely stroll through the cobblestone streets was conducted with great humour and wit by Glen Colson who, it must be said, is **never** lost for words. Just an evening spent with this maniac is enough to put you in a state of permanent shock for about a week and on this occasion he was at his most hilarious best, taking the piss out of everybody and

everything, and reducing me and Pete to a couple of laughing hyenas for most of the evening. On returning to the scene of THE EVENT, things were beginning to warm up. If you can imagine it, the setting was like something out of a Bunuel movie... two or three courtyards in which various musical ensembles played simultaneously to a somewhat bourgeois, drunken, roving audience, oblivious to anyone but themselves. The bands attempting to provide entertainment were indeed a curious selection. There was what I assumed to be a trad jazz band, all the members of which were dressed in grubby old flashers' mags, then there was an above average 'garage punk-rock' group doing Who and Stones numbers, a poor old guy playing Beethoven on a grand piano in the middle of the lawn surrounded by piss-artists singing 'Roll Out The Barrel', and a splendid Trinidad Steel Band playing tuneful rhythmic music that inspired Colson to conduct us in a bout of spastic lurching about while he composed obscene songs about our Jamaican friends and sang along at the top of his voice quite unashamedly. All this surreal lunacy continued until after midnight when we all assembled in the dressing room and the band began the serious business of tuning up. Lead guitarist, Martin Stone, relaxed and thoughtful as always, moved from his chair in front of the TV and plugged his guitar into the amp, knelt down, and started to play a few runs up and down the neck, fluent and lightning fast. Multi-instrumentalist, Phil Lithman, had already started to strike a series of dense chords on rhythm guitar, Paul Riley was pacing up and down plucking out the bass lines in his usual solid fashion, and Paul 'Dice Man' Bailey, looking, if he doesn't mind me saying so, as ever like a used-car salesman, was blaring out intermittent solos on the tenor sax. The line-up was soon completed by ace drummer Pete Thomas and his side-kick for the night, Glen Colson, both of whom had just returned with the news that they'd managed to borrow an extra drum kit and that Glen would be playing along with them that night. They perched themselves on the steps in the dressing room, surrounded themselves with empty beer bottles and pounded along, adding intricate percussion to an impromptu jam that reached an astonishing Allman Brothers-type peak at one point before the call came and it was time to head for the stage and get down to business. By now it was gone 2 o'clock in the morning, and everybody, band and audience, were practically wasted. The stage was set up in a large marquee in one of the courtyards, and as it was the main centre of activity for most of the evening, the place was full of stupefied part-time winos, masquerading as potential members of the aristocracy, falling about all over each other, incapable of anything except the frequent torrent of monosyllabic abuse. But what the hell, they were obviously enjoying themselves, and when it comes down to it, that's all they were there for. 'We're all very tired 'cause it's 2 o'clock in the morning and we're usually in bed by eleven, so we're going to start with a tired old country number'... Phil introduces the set and they go straight into 'I'll Be Home', nice harmonies, tight rhythms, and a good song to kick off with. 'Mama And Papa Had Love' comes next, and although the audience reaction is, as expected, minimal, they press on with 'The Basic Principles Of The Human Life Form On This



Planet As We Know It From Birth To Eventual Oneness With Its Creator' ('Breathe A Little'). Things aren't going quite right though. The mikes sound a bit dodgy, spirits are obviously flagging from sheer exhaustion, and a large part of the audience, apart from a handful of people who'd become vaguely interested, were wandering off into the night in search of a place to collapse permanently. Not even Glen, who was treating his role as second drummer with the utmost seriousness, could inject too much life into a set that was plainly lacking the fire and excitement that would have produced at an earlier hour under more conducive circumstances. However, that old show-biz cliché which says that 'the show must go on' was faithfully upheld, and they summoned all their resources of strength and rescued a dying set with spirited renditions of 'Streets Of Baltimore', 'The Ballad Of Chilli Willi', 'Older Guys', 'Desert Island Woman', 'Friday Song', 'The Flow', 'Walkin' Blues' (with guest Will Stallibrass playing great harmonica), 'Just Like The Devil', 'Boppin' The Blues', and 'Choo Choo Ch' Boogie'. When they finally stepped down from the stage it was well gone 3am, so without any hanging about the roadies dismantled the equipment and loaded it up on the van, the windscreen of which incidentally, some lunatic had seen fit to kick in, and the rest of us, now totally knackered, drove off back to London. Very little was said on the way, the occasional comment here and there about the events of the evening, but the atmosphere was decidedly subdued and weary for the most part. Even Glen was murmuring in hushed tones, while Jake was the only person exhibiting signs of life, hands on the steering wheel, eyes fixed on the road, singing and talking, trying to stay awake. Speaking for myself as a privileged 'outsider' who can pick and choose when he wants to make the effort to travel with a band on the road, I found the whole day thoroughly enjoyable, and I didn't even mind the tiredness. But looking out of the window of the van at 5am, Oxford way behind us, the sun peering up on the horizon, and the mist and dew all over the surrounding countryside, the weirdness, the graft, the pressures, the turmoil, the hassles, and the total illogical, inexplicably attractive lunacy of the whole rock'n'roll circus came home to me loud and clear. A small piece of history to put things

in some kind of perspective. One of my biggest regrets in music is that at the time I was too young to be totally aware of the British R'n'B explosion in the early mid-60's. I can remember the early Who, Yardbirds, and Stones, but I'm afraid that's about it, and it's only nowadays, when tracing back people's careers to early times, and listening to all those old records, that I can really appreciate what went on then. I know and have met a lot of people who can recall those days with fond memories and in the minutest detail, but to me, the London R'n'B scene meant, and still does mean to a certain extent, a jumbled up mess of people, places, and influences... the Marquee, The Who, mods, pills, coffee bars, The Yardbirds, Gino Washington, Pete Townshend, Crawdaddy Club, etc, etc. All these names were an integral part of what was to be one of the biggest and most important developments in the history of British popular music. A handful of people were listening to black American music via imported blues and soul records, and from the beginnings when everybody just copied note for note, distinct styles began to develop, the music became more refined gradually, more violent and powerful, and a lot of bands were left behind. Only those capable of withstanding the rigours of a ludicrously overloaded work schedule, and talented enough to absorb all the influences and use them, survived for any length of time, and there weren't that many. As I've said, I'm no authority on that era and that's just a scant, disjointed view of what I know to have happened. Pete Frame, John Tobler, Andrew Lauder, Fred Munt, Jim McGuire, Jake, Martin Stone and a million other people would be able to give you a much clearer and more personalised account of the whole scene, so I'm going to leave that to another article, another time, and another person.

The whole point of mentioning all that was because, believe it or not, it does have connections with the Willis, although admittedly it is an historical connection as opposed to a musical one. One of the most popular, and for a brief period one of the most successful, groups from that era was The Action, and although they aren't relevant to this story until late in their career when Martin Stone joined them, I think it's worth taking a brief diversion to quote from a newspaper cutting which in some ways explains a lot about what I've been trying to say.

New "in" group among London's Mod pop leaders are The Action. They have replaced The Who as the regular Tuesday night group at the Marquee Club—the best showcase a Mod group can have—and their second record, 'I'll Keep On Holding On', a new version of an American hit, is widely tipped.

Lead vocalist is Reggie King, 21, pale-faced and ultra-talkative: "We are going through the 'in' stage now," he says. "We're the new thing and our fans get a snob feeling following us when we're not nationally known. If we had a hit, they'd move on to someone new, someone still obscure. London Mods are insulted to feel that they're sharing their groups with the peasants."

"The Action aren't really Mod—individualist is a better word. Mod is old-fashioned now, but we're modern in our clothes (new Carnaby Street outfits every fortnight), drinks (whisky/coke; vodka/

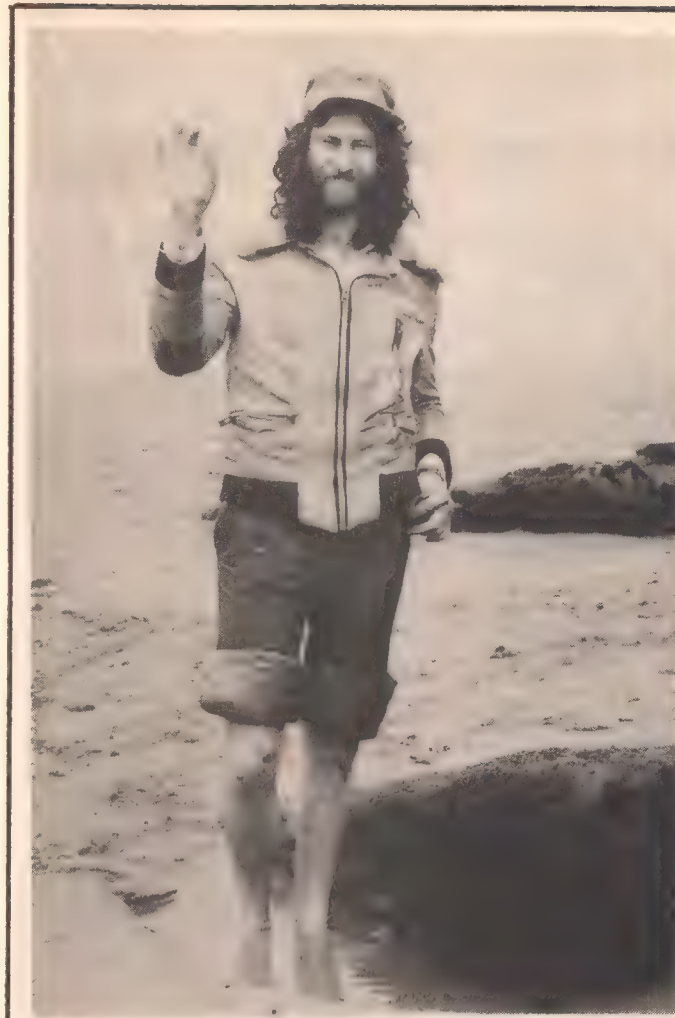
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VAN MORRISON'S NEW ALBUM 'VEEDON FLEECE'



UNLEASHED

FROM WARNER BROS.



lime), and general outlook. Long hair and dirt is 18 months out of date."

Their stage-act is edgy and neurotic, but less violent than The Who's previous Mod rave. Off-stage they have a system to keep inter-group edginess to a minimum. "We're not allowed to quarrel," says King, "but we can claim an annoyance if we get fed up with someone. If one of us gets five annoyances against him, he gets a formal dig in the ribs from the rest of the group."

Amazing isn't it, but I can quite believe every word of it. I wrote all about the Action's History in ZigZag 37 so I don't intend to repeat myself, but after that article was published a lot of you readers, more learned than myself on the subject, sent me in loads of cuttings, record lists and other paraphernalia all about The Action, for which I'm very grateful. The most valuable piece of information I received was a complete list of singles that The Action made, and one kind person even sent me a tape of them. Many thanks mate. The singles were: 'Land Of A 1000 Dances'/'In My Lonely Room' (Parlophone R 5354 Oct 15 1965), 'I'll Keep Holding On'/'Hey Sah-Lo-Ney' (Parlophone R 5410 Feb 11 1966), 'Baby You've Got It'/'Since I Lost My Baby' (Parlophone R 5474 July 1 1966), 'Never Ever'/'Twentyfourth Hour' (Parlophone R 5572 Feb 17 1967), and 'Shadows And Reflections'/'Something Has Hit Me' (Parlophone R 5610 June 23 1967). Martin Stone joined the Action after those few singles were made, the band changed their name to Mighty Baby releasing two very fine albums. But before we go into



that, a brief resume of Martin's career with his own comments culled from a lengthy interview we did a couple of months back.

His first band of note was Juniors Blues Band which also included fellow-Willi Phil Lithman, and as very little is known or remembered about them we'll go straight onto the Rockhouse Band which is worth dwelling on in a bit more detail simply because of the characters involved. From what I can gather, the first line-up was David Coxhill, Ralph Denyer, Pete Shelley, Keith Tillman, Stuart Cowell, and Spud Riley. Then Martin joined, replacing Stuart Cowell after which both Ralph Denyer and Pete Shelley left, and a guy called Mick O'Neill joined.

"We were with Gunnell Agency and were on the road pretty solidly. We used to get a lot of work but every now and then they would team us up with one of these visiting American acts. They were very heavy gigging days because on those kind of tours we tended to always double (two gigs in one night). In fact we did three gigs on one particular night. Two of them were in London and the one in between was in Folkestone. We did it with Rufus Thomas, and we also backed The Inkspots. That was the band that included Mick O'Neill who did all that." Concerning the members of the band . . . "David Coxhill went to Manfred Mann's Chapter Three for a long time. The last I heard of him was a story from Keith Tillman about him being on a George Harrison session. He was a great bluffer, he would always bluff his way through parts. Mick

O'Neill is an incredible character. His current fantasy is to do with the Rockhouse Band. At the time we were close to Bluesology which had Elton John, his real name being Reg Dwight of course. Well to cut the story short, the gist of it is that Mick O'Neill suffers from the delusion that he wrote all of Elton John's hits back in 1965. And he wants to sue him for millions. He'd say, 'Do you remember when I was writing that song called "Crocodile Rock"? Well, Mick O'Neill had a song called 'Alligator Walk' or something, and he said, 'Do you remember "Alligator Walk"? That cxxx's ripped me off.' And Keith would say, 'Yeah I remember you did have one called that, but it didn't sound anything like that.' And Mick said, 'Yeah it did. I remember him just standing over my shoulder.' He's completely obsessed with being ripped off, but he's actually not playing as far as I know.

"Keith Tillman is a farmer now. He's given up music but he says he'd like to play. He had a bootleg label called Python Records—old blues things. He's very much a collector . . . that's how I met him really because I was a fanatical collector at one time too—Chicago stuff. He didn't like rock'n'roll and eventually gave it all up and went back to collecting. He's got one of the best collections of blues records in the country.

"I joined the Rockhouse Band in 1964 for a couple of years, but it was pretty much a downhill run. When I joined they were gigging an awful lot and then it just tailed off gradually, mainly I think because Keith and I were



into playing the blues a lot whereas the sax section were well into jazz which is where they had come from. When Keith and I eventually split off, the band sort of crumbled into nothing really, gigging only every other week. So Keith and I found a pianist, John Lewis, who was really into blues (he later went on to join Brett Marvin), a drummer—an Australian guy, and Chris Youlden. So we formed this band, which had no name, and we used to play the Nags Head a few times supporting Savoy Brown."

Martin was eventually offered a gig with Savoy Brown, but before that he formed his own short-lived band called Stone's Masonry which comprised Martin on lead guitar, Spud Riley on drums, Pete Shelley on keyboards (he later went on to play with Terry Reid), and Keith Tillman on bass (he ended up joining John Mayall). In their brief life-span they managed to lay down two tracks that

were released on the 'Anthology Of British Blues' series on Immediate Records. Due to the rapid disappearance of most of Immediate's catalogue after they folded up, I'd given up all hope of obtaining either of the two tracks until recently when I came across an LP called 'British Blues—Archive Series For Collectors Vol.1' (RCA LSP 4409), which contains one of the Stone's Masonry things. It's called 'Flapjacks' and sounds very much as you would expect it to, although Martin's guitar work, even though restricted by the blues format, manages to attain a high degree of individuality and inventiveness. Strangely enough, the other cut, whatever it may be called, is not included

in the rest of the series... a pity. Anyway, Martin's next step was to join Savoy Brown.

"When I joined them it was made very clear to me that I was a rhythm guitar player, but I didn't particularly get off on Savoy Brown. Between Keith and I, they were a joke... a kind of synonym for a good, honky imitation. But on the other hand I'd had enough of a taste of being on the road to jump at it, and they were playing Chicago stuff, so it wasn't too much of a compromise. I was quite happy to play second guitar for a while at least." Martin made just one album with Savoy Brown, their first, called 'Shake Down' (Decca SK 4883) (1967). The line-up at the time was Brice Portius (vcls), Kim Simmonds (gtr), Ray Chappell (bass), Leo Mannings (drums), and Martin (gtr). The album is standard blues fare, nothing really earth-shattering, but certainly interesting. Martin wrote one track, an instrumental called 'The Door-mouse Rides The Rails'.

"I still get cats asking for that. It's absolutely awful. By that time everybody was giving me more space. Kim had an instrumental on the album, and they asked me if I wanted one too. It was becoming more democratic that way. Actually we were just about taking off when that album came out. But we went to Copenhagen for a few weeks to do some gigs, and really that was the end of it all. It was a very delicate thing. Psychedelic music was making its impact, and blues bands were either rigidly sticking to what they were doing, or just going completely the other way, following Cream and that sort of thing.

Next in the line of Martin's various ventures was a band called Kokomo Phoenix which featured Ray Chappell who had also left Savoy Brown, Spud Riley, John Wilkinson, and Martin. They lasted just about long enough to play a few gigs however, and soon Martin was on the move again, this time to join The Action.

"I replaced Ian Whitman in The Action. Basically, he came into music from a different angle. He came at it from a jazz point of view, very much different from the other lads who were pill popping... club, working-class trip in a way. I think there was some kind of explosion from different points. Ian felt he was too delicate to handle that sort of thing, and he was asked to leave. So we did gigs together just to work me in and then that was it. The songs were much more complicated than anything I had ever done before and I learnt a lot. After a while Ian came back in again at the point where Reggy King left. As The Action we signed with Blackhill and started to make an album that never came out. We became dissatisfied with the way things were going and so we went to John Curd who was just starting Head Records."

Now I'm not going to elaborate on the history of The Action again because it's all there in ZZ No.37 and I don't want to repeat myself. Also, this bloody article is principally concerned with Chilli Willi & The Red Hot Peppers, so we'll pick up the story where Mighty Baby, as The Action became known, disbanded, and Martin, after a period of giving up music altogether, joined up with Phil Lithman again.

GONZALEZ

Gonzalez have now been on the music scene in London for the past three years with a unique brand of funky soul and latin rhythms. The 12 members of Gonzalez all hail from such renowned groups as John Mayall, Keef Hartley, Dr John, Georgie Fame and the Blue Flames, Geno Washington, Ginger Baker's 'Airforce', Herbie Goins, and Stealers Wheel. Their first album is now available on EMI and includes their latest single "Pack It Up" (EMI 2200).

Live

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"Right through that whole history I had been in contact with Phil... he's been around all the time. He knew all the other guys in The Action and Savoy Brown. When he went to America for that period of time we lost touch a little bit, but I used to get letters from him. So after a while of doing next to nothing, I bought a guitar again, wrote Phil a letter and said 'come back'."

Just shortly before that though, Martin became involved with Uncle Dog.

"At the point where my heart turned back to music I bumped into George Butler who was playing drums with Uncle Dog at the time. He'd been an old friend from Head Records days, and he asked me down to their rehearsals. I still hadn't got an electric guitar but they had lots of them, so I sat in with them on a couple of rehearsals, and they asked me to join. So I did, although by this time I was working with Phil on the Willis' thing, rehearsing for the album. With Uncle Dog it was almost back to Savoy Brown days because I was playing second guitar again. They did a few country things which I could play on, but the other stuff I couldn't feel my way into. So when the Willis thing started to grow and get better and better, I said, 'This is what I'm going to do'."

"When Phil Lithman came over from America we started immediately. He'd come over to the Muslem commune where I was living and we'd rehearse and play Hank Williams songs all night. Before long I decided that this is really what I wanted to do. Originally we didn't think about a band really, because Phil had gone through a personal musical fad—he'd gone back into straight bluegrass music. So we didn't contemplate a band as such as it seemed easier to make a record. I met the people from Revelation and they liked us, so we made an album ('Kings Of The Robot Rhythm'—also discussed in ZZ No.37). We also did a couple of gigs in fact."

Then came the gradual evolution of the Willis as each member fell into place one by one.

"The first one we got was Dice Man (Paul Bailey). We wanted a banjo player and we found one through Jo-Ann Kelly—a guy called Keith who plays for Country Fever now. He came round and we realised straight away that he was too good for us. He was a bluegrass player whereas we were old rock'n'roll, blues freaks who liked bluegrass music. We played some songs together and he seemed to enjoy himself, and when we said good-bye to him he said, 'See you again'. We then talked it over between ourselves and decided that we wouldn't be able to keep up with him. So we didn't contact him again and just thought, 'Well, who else can we get?' Then I remembered that The Action used to live around the corner from some people I knew who shared the same house with Paul. I remembered listening to bluegrass banjo records there a long time ago and they said that they belonged to the guy upstairs who plays banjo. I didn't really know Paul, I just used to say hello to him... that was about six or seven years ago. Anyway, so I went round there and sure enough he's still living there. I re-introduced myself to try and click everything into place for him, and then I asked him to join the group. He said, 'I'm sorry I don't play banjo anymore'. So I said, 'OK, I'm just ZIGZAG 47 Page 40

living round the corner, come by sometime'. I went back home and tried to think of who else we could try, but Paul came by and said, 'I had a go on the banjo last night and I can still do it'. So that was that, he joined on banjo. His banjo technique improved very rapidly—he picked it up again pretty quick. Then we started looking for another person. At this point we decided to be a group as the album was already out of the way. Phil was against electricity basically but we said it would be alright as we had done a couple of electric things. So we started to look for another guy to fill it out. What happened was that we got together with a guy I met in the street accidentally—Robin Scott, who I had done an album with a few years before, and he was looking for a deal for himself as a solo artist. He came round to Queensgate, where Revelation was based, and he brought his bass player with him. We said, 'Why not join up with us?' so he played his songs to us with his bass player, whose name was Paul Riley, but somehow we couldn't really see Robin in the group as he had a personal aspect to his music. But Paul was great, so we ripped him off! There were no hard feelings there because Paul felt more affinity to what we were doing so it all worked out. Phil was still hanging out for not having a drummer. We rehearsed for a long time without a drummer, we did our first gig without a drummer—at the Roundhouse with the Pink Fairies, and we played mostly acoustic music with a couple of electric numbers. I borrowed a Telecaster and did about two or three electric things. But really a bass man needs a drummer, so Phil was just about outnumbered... anyway listening to it he must have realised that it would have carried a bit more punch, so we got a drummer and then it all made sense. Paul Riley knew Pete (Thomas), he'd played with Robin Scott with him, and he came up from Brighton, and he was great."

From then on, as you well know, the Willis have never looked back. If, as seems to be the case, the band was formed half by accident and half by intention, then it all seems to be a divine act of fate because a more adaptable, proficient, easy-going and friendly bunch of musicians I've yet to meet. Their approach is solidly down-to-earth in the best American musical traditions. But, and this is a big but, they ain't 'laid-back' or 'mellow' like a lot of American bands who don't find it necessary to graft. The Willis are constantly developing, retaining their basic approach and their country and blues roots, but always searching for new material. Phil Lithman, their principal song-writer, is a master of his craft. He obviously has an astute knowledge of American music—it's history and all its different forms, and with this refreshingly open-minded, broad-based attitude, plus the very high standard of musicianship that the whole group display, they're able to give a performance that puts them up there with the fabulous Flying Burrito Brothers and Commander Cody—two bands that seem the all-too-obvious comparison. I reckon, in all honesty, that the Willis could be better than either of these two bands. They may not have a Bernie Leadon, but they've got Martin Stone, one of the best five guitarists in this country without a doubt.

They may not have Michael Clarke,

but who needs him when you've got Pete Thomas, surely the most promising drummer to emerge in the last year. And when you line up Paul Riley, Phil Lithman, and Paul Bailey against the likes of Billy C. Farlow, Chris Hillman, Bill Kirchen, Al Perkins etc, the difference in standards to my mind is minimal.

Over the last two years, the band have worked their balls off. They're constantly on the road, establishing their name and reputation at a thousand and one clubs and colleges all over the country, and then going back time and time again to those same places because the demand to see them has been so great.

They are of course a recording band as well, and you ought to know that they have an album out on Mooncrest Records. It's called 'Bongos Over Balham', and everybody—press, the fans, and people who haven't even seen them 'live', are raving about it ecstatically. And who can blame them. My only slight reservation concerns the production which seems a bit inconsistent, but the songs themselves are fabulous, and the quality of the playing is exceptional. Such is the number of songs they have available, they could have put out a triple album of first class material without any trouble, and the only way you're going to hear it all is to go out and see them 'live'. Then you'll not only want the album, you'll need it. I hope the next one they do will be recorded in a sweaty old pub like The Hope & Anchor where I once saw them perform one of the best sets I've ever seen from anybody. It's difficult to describe how you feel when you come away after seeing something like that. It's like a kick up the arse, a hand on your soul, a bolt through the brain, and the sun in your eyes all at once... makes you feel so bloody good all you can do is smile and nod your head. I'm buggered if I can say any more than that... it's like trying to tell someone 'bout... blah, blah, blah... you know what I mean? You'll just have to see and hear for yourselves.

I was standing in my local pub minding my own business one Sunday... it was at the Tithe Farm House—good pub you should check it out—and all of a sudden this creep who I hadn't seen for about three years comes up to me and says, "Hey man, I've just got to tell you about this really incredible band I saw the other day... man they were unbelievable! There were five of 'em... the drummer was a tall lanky guy—wore a baseball cap, overalls, an Hawaiian short-sleeved shirt, and hair half-way down his back, and he looked pretty normal compared to the rest of them! They did this great rock'n'roll song—it was called 'Pinball Boogie' I think, and their rhythm guitar and banjo player came out to the front of the stage and did this great archetypal rock'n'roll singer impersonation... he was even dressed in all the gear! Then the guitar player, who was consistently shit-hot, he put on this mask, can you believe that?—and then he introduced this song by reading a page out of 'Lord Of The Rings', tearing it out, and wiping his nose on it!! Jesus man, they were dynamite! You gotta see 'em!'"

"What's their name?" I enquired.

"Chilli Willi & The Red Hot Peppers," he blurted.

"Far out."

□ ANDY

The New Album from NEKTAR down to earth

Nektar return to Britain fresh from their very first American tour. On this tour they headlined at every venue they played, sold out four concerts in St. Louis playing to over 12,000 people. They triumphed in New York's Academy of Music at a special midnight concert which was broadcast live over New York's WNEW-FM radio. Their album REMEMBER THE FUTURE is now in the US Top 50 and moving upwards every week. The British band who live in Germany and who are very much at home in the USA. See them while you can!

NEKTAR ON TOUR

November 21st: Polytechnic, MANCHESTER
November 22nd: University, BATH
November 23rd: Corn Exchange, CAMBRIDGE
November 24th: Grayhound, CROYDON
November 25th: Town Hall, READING
November 27th: Concert Hall, GREENWICH
November 28th: University, SWANSEA
November 29th: Community Centre, SLOUGH
November 30th: Lees Cliffe Hall, FOLKESTONE
December 1st: Palace Theatre, NEWARK
December 3rd: Surrey University, GUILDFORD

SPECIAL GUEST JOHN ST. FIELD



UAG 29680

REPRESENTATION: BARRIE MARSHALL, A.H.A. LTD., 177 UPPER STREET, N1

Before you attempt to battle your way through this interview, let me fill you in on some details. I've been waiting to read this myself for about six months now, that's how long it's taken Chris Briggs to sort it all out, and as you'll find out, it's not at all like your normal ZigZag interview. This part here is just the first of two or three that have been edited out of a series of marathon conversations for which Briggs I think deserves some sort of medal.

ZigZag starts a series of conversations with Roy Harper this month covering every aspect of his music and life. This first episode is probably the most difficult one to start with for those unfamiliar with Harper. The original purpose of this preamble was to coax the unsympathetic into reading and re-assessing their position on the man (in keeping with the spirit we've chosen the hardest one first). He is widely under-rated as a perceptive lyricist and chronicler of our chaotic times and really merits wider serious attention than he is given.

To come in later issues is 'The Harper Panacea for Football in the Seventies', 'Cricket for the Short-Armed', 'Bird Spotting in Hampshire', 'The Truth About Paul Simon', 'Who Wears the Trousers North of Watford?' and 'How to Run a Bentley on Ten Bob a Day'. Best of luck chaps!

This extract takes off as I was about to blow a fuse.

ZZ: I'm reaching the stage where I'm on the verge of overload. You know. I'm going to start losing where all this started. RH: No, it's alright—I'll end it for you soon.

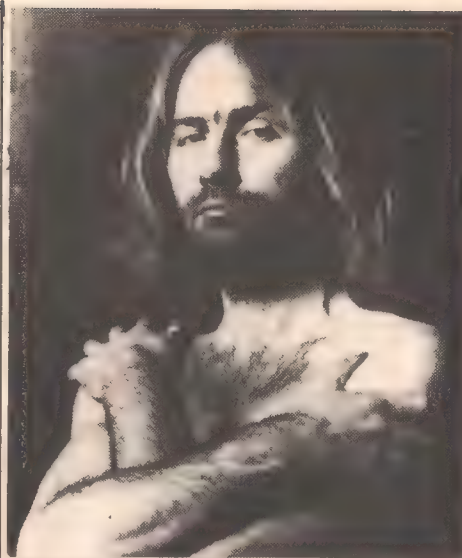
ZZ: (stifled, speechless noises)

RH: No, I know, I know what you're saying, but let me just finish that.

ZZ: Okay. I'm not making the connections I should do.

RH: Yeah. Well, make 'em any time you feel fit to make 'em—and I think by the way that all this conversation *now* should just go on there.

There are other songs on this record that are all associated with where I've been for this last six months/year, because my love-life has been in a turmoil, an absolute turmoil. But that's another scene entirely—that's another part of my private



life that I've not got together at all... or maybe I've got it together more than anybody else, but it's all comparative, and who knows... certainly I don't. You see, over this album ['Valentine'] and the next one is spread the kind of ugly demise of a relationship that could've flourished; and the kind of... the write-off of it... Yeah, the chronicle of it. It starts really with things like the second verse on 'Commune', where the words are 'And I watched her making her first daisy-chain, as her nipples hung hard in suggestion; and naked gnat-bitten we drifted the plain in the hazy desert of sensation. We dreamt of all the loves we'd known, and we never thought of the sorrow; with forelocks wound on the primrose down, in the wood by the empty long-barrow. Two silver greenflies to flicker the back-dropping lush of the emerald springtime; to lust for a moment in love of another as dust on a dragonfly's wing.' And it's like... that was... that relationship at its height, and it reached some incredible heights, that's a kind of evaluation of it at its peak. And it was no mean relationship. But you see, a great clue to where it was at there is the first line, which is 'And I watched her making her first daisy-chain,' you know. Well, which English girl by the time she's reached twenty-two...

ZZ: Hasn't made a daisy-chain...

RH: Hasn't made a daisy-chain, right. This

particular girl was American, and I'd just taught her how to make a daisy-chain—which really is an indication of how far apart cultures are. 'Cos many a time I've watched Alice in the park—sorry, Alice being the eternal ten-year-old—making a daisy-chain. Which was one of the main reasons, you know, her being culturally so different, for the final break-up of the relationship. And of course... I think... She would have, as an American, and as a New York Jewish mother, as the dominant figure in the relationship, she's got a better chance really with a guy who is culturally from the south of this country, than from the north like I am. Because almost like hereditarily, once you get north of Watford, the male wears the pants in a very definite way. And I mean, that's probably gonna provide a source of controversy, if it's picked up by the right or wrong people, depending on where you stand. But I've seen it many times—in fact I've seen the British male stood on a stage in America looking completely free... and actually to an American female it is a kind of statement of freedom. Like, the Beatles were a kind of statement of freedom, of four guys on the loose... which is like something that doesn't happen, or didn't happen at that time, to the American male. I mean, you had your swooning bit, and your bobby-sox, Frank Sinatra, situations of obviously guys who had been cultured to be bachelors and remain so, like the current David Cassidy thing, you know... it's like in his contract that he doesn't have a regular girlfriend, otherwise he's a dead duck commercially, you know, particularly in America... it doesn't go *here* so much, at all. But you see, finally, with that situation of kind of unsuspecting, almost, and almost unconsciously dominant British male—innocently dominant, I would say—confronting equally innocent, in certain respects, but let's not get into the implications of that, American female... you've got a head-on collision. And for the first few months, or a year, even, or... you know... let's not specify any length of time... it works, because you're probably both over the moon about each other. But as the struggle for dominance—which is actually, by the way, the one respect on which Nietzsche attacked Darwin, because Darwin sort of celebrated struggle for life... was seen by



Nietzsche as being not necessarily... well, not true at all. He was moreover... wasn't it the prodigality in life, wasn't life a prodigality itself, a kind of extreme luxury—wasn't it *luxurious*, wasn't it so abundant and plentiful... and it wasn't so much of a struggle for life as a struggle for power. And that... you know... that was just something I thought of on the side as I was going through that there. But it sort of developed into a struggle for power. And by the way, my inference a couple of sentences ago to the effect that she would probably make it on a better level with a southern English male, is only something that you can relate to if you've really lived half of your life in the North and half in the South, which, you know, I've done. So it became a struggle, and I've known many of them that have been a struggle. Now, if one partner gives up, because of any reason at all... because, for instance, *he* is so weak kneed in his desire of whatever she's giving him or... you know, that he can't do without it under any circumstances whatever, and he gives in to her every whim whatsoever, then you've got a sort of relationship. It's completely dominated by her, you know, and she pulls no punches either. There's no limit to feminine revengefulness, you know, whatsoever. In so far as I say that, I'm not anti-feminist... I'm very much a ladies' man. You know—put me in a crowd of women and I'm in my element. Not necessarily as a tyrant, at all, or any tyrannical force... you know, just a form of real enjoyment. But you see, then it got to a stage... you know, if you get to a stage in a relationship where one dominates over the other, I think it's a very... it's a semi-relationship, it's not really the type of relationship that I would value, because I like... you know, I do go for genuine equality, at the same time as... you know, where, in actual fact, if I sort of say, you know, 'Blah, blah, blah,' and stamp my foot on the ground, you know, act like Taurus rising for a moment... and she doesn't say anything, you know—an arbitrary woman, I'm talking about now—she doesn't say anything, because she just stands in a moment of fear... Then sooner or later, just because of the way my own brain works, I'm gonna think, 'Christ, I was a bit

rough on her there.' I didn't mean to say 'Christ' there actually, but it's one of those kind of, you know, exclamations...

ZZ: Like I'd say 'Oh my God!' and I haven't got one.

RH: Yes, right. Every time I say... I don't say it actually, I never say it, but when I hear other people saying 'God knows,' and I think 'And *he* doesn't exist, either, so who does?' You know. But... if there is a genuine kind of reciprocation there, a genuine kind of... well, it's not that my conscience in such a situation would bite at me, so much as my own *sense* would come back at me and say 'Yes, you were tending to manhandle that situation. You'd better go a make it up.' But if, like, I was in that situation and I just... you know, back to the stamping-the-foot-situation and laying the law down, if I get from a woman an immediate reaction of rebellion and... you know, insurrection [quiet chuckles], I come back harder myself. So that it really

escalates the situation into a violent one. And as violent as *she* get, I go one step further. So that we've lost the original sense of where we were entirely. And that was the case with this relationship. You know, if she could have just seen what I was, if she could just have seen what I was, and the way that I functioned, and just taken it easy, you know, she would eventually have had everything she wanted from me, which is actually nothing. Because, you know, life isn't that meaningful or purposeful or... I mean, it comes down to then 'What is life?' And that's rather a whole big sidetrack for me to take at this particular juncture, so I won't take it, I refuse to take that tangent at the moment, 'cos we're talking about something else. So stop it, Roy, get down! You see, at that point at which we escalate it—or I should say, and so at that point at which we escalate it, she was too (a) naive, and (b) brought up to be dominant inside a relationship, to be able to stand down—just for a moment, just to allow me to stand down, too. And so it became an impossible proposition, although I still loved her in many many ways. And it became... and I was no less at fault, either, because, you know, I'd been conditioned, and there's nothing much you can do about your conditioning when

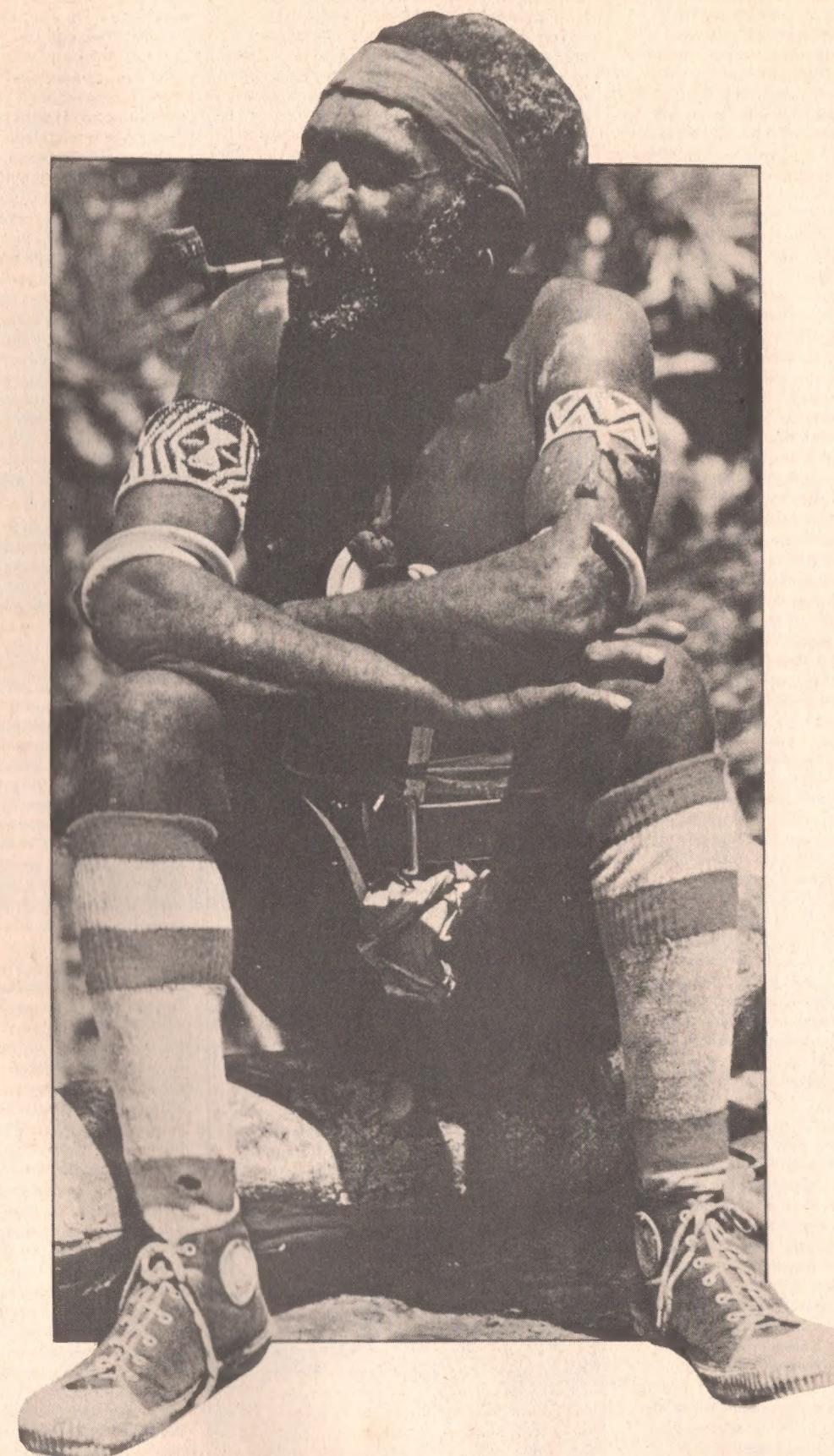
you're put on the spot. It's like Martin Hayman asking me the other day, you know, the guy from Sounds, he just suddenly threw it at me, right from nowhere in a conversation, 'Okay, so what's *your* panacea? What's your expedient? How would you deal with it?' You know. And I just suddenly had to think, right from nowhere, what would I do? And I just suddenly thought, 'Well England needs a father at the moment. Badly. But it's the kind of father who listens to what the people are saying; because now the people are the masters.' I mean, if you in fact teach... The people have been taught to be masters, so why should they be slaves any more? You know. But what they do need is a leader that they can all—sorry about the next word, but—*relate* to. And who can relate with them, who can talk it over and see what can be done. And I thought, 'Yes, what really needs to be done, what England kind of probably needs at the moment is a Socialist dictator,' which is like swinging from one end of the spectrum to the other. And of course he took it out of context, because he doesn't really trust me; and he doesn't really trust the honesty level at which I work. He took it completely out of context, and he called the whole article 'Socialist Dictator,' you know, made it with that heading. So that it wasn't, you know, a fair judgement of what I'd said... Mind you, I mean I've had a few fencing matches with him now—they've been funny interviews, because he doesn't trust, he's not prepared to trust anything that I'm talking about, you know. And I *am*, because everything that I say is straight clean out of the top of my head. You know. But back to the other situation... when it got into an indefensibly escalated position, I was into kind of 'Baby, you know my disease—I'm insane. And fighting me doesn't appease my brain, and loving me doesn't increase my gain, and asking me to say "please" is a strain. And I can destroy you with ease, that's plain; you're not gonna get me to cease to complain. So why don't you leave me in peace, in pain?' You know. And yet I still wanted her to stay—I still really wanted that relationship to work. That song was only a last desperate attempt to try and make it work. It was like... 'Can't you see where I am? Can't you see what's been happening? Can't you see what we've done? Let's take it back down again.' You know. 'Cos we'd already escalated into an impossible position, about three times. And neither of us would give in, that was the point, neither of us would give in. But then of course, you know, I committed the unforgivable, in that one day I was working, and... I was getting into something, and it was a pretty lengthy sort of thought-chain... and we'd been having a pretty heavy week between us, we'd both been pushing each other towards the edge... you know, a struggle for power... you know, whereas like I've got another relationship, which I can tell you about later, where in fact... you know, we're very... in fact, wary of each other—where no way are we gonna push each other at all. And I've got a completely free hand, and she has. And there's no struggle for any power because it doesn't exist between us. But then again, she's sort of more of a kindred spirit, mentally; whereas in fact *this* girl was more of a kindred spirit physically. We were more into a sexual relationship, you know—and a very good sexual relationship, too. But then it got... you see, I committed

IF YOU GET THROUGH THIS ONE THE REST WILL BE A PIECE OF P--- THE FIRST IN A SERIES OF CONVERSATIONS WITH ROY HARPER

the unforgiveable. One day she allowed the kid to lie there crying. He was screaming, he got to the point of screaming; he was only a few months old, you know, so the point is he was at the screaming stage. But she never used to usually allow him to *do* that, at all. Because she's one of those people who picks the baby up as soon as he starts to cry, so that he doesn't cry. But then he in turn comes to expect that, so that when he doesn't get picked up he screams, right? But . . . I dunno what she's doing now, I mean it's almost a year since I've seen her. I don't know whether she's any different than that . . . but she reckons that the way that I would bring up a kid sucks! You know. And I just can't really get through to her that actually I ought to be part . . . I could never get through to her that I ought to be part of the bringing-up of the kid, you know. It's the American female, it's the completely mother-dominated family. It's back to Al Capone. You know, she's the original sort of New York Jewish momma. I don't have any racist scenes going . . . it's just that . . . it is a bit of an obvious one. But anyway . . . she just allowed him to lie there screaming, you know. And she knew what condition my head was in. And eventually I just kind of . . . 'cos I was going from one thought to the other, and I was going from what I was thinking into, you know, 'Christ, that kid!' and then back again into what I was thinking. And eventually I just exploded. And I just said, 'For fxxk's sake, shut that kid up!' And she stomped into the room, you know, and when I say stomped I mean stomped, and she stood straight in front of me and she said 'Shut your fxxking self up!' You know. So I just stood up and hit her, you know. I mean, it was like red rag to a bull, and I just hit her—which I'd never done before, and I probably would never have reason to do again, you know, with a woman. But as soon as I'd come to, as soon as I'd grabbed hold of myself again and I'd realised that I'd exploded over the top, I was kind of . . . it had released in fact *in me* a lot of *gash* energy that *had* to be released that way, you know, because of the conditions that had been set up, because of the struggle for power—which I'm sure she's still not conscious of . . . and maybe I'm over-conscious of. But of course I had committed the ultimate sin, of physical violence; and no way was she going to tolerate that. And there was no way back. And in fact what she did was to pick up the kid and walk out, straightaway. And what she did, in fact, she walked right into the house of perhaps my closest friend; who wasn't there, but his old lady was. And her reaction to the story was 'Well, why did he hit you?' and I don't know what the answer to that one was, but . . . She (my friend's lady) later sort of told me, she said, 'Well, if Pete hit me,' she said 'I'd think "The cxnt! The bastard!" I'd go and hide under the bed, and think "The cxnt! The bastard!" But then I'd think "But what did I do?"' You know—which no way was *this girl* gonna think. And as another friend of mine said later, you know, because she was very aware of the situation, a female friend of mine, she said, 'Yes, well violence promotes violence, doesn't it?' You know—she summed it up as precisely as that. And she was very on the ball as per usual. You know, I mean, if you do give me a red rag, Christ! I mean, you know, I sure do charge at it. There's nobody like me for that. I suppose . . . there's the equivalent . . . I suppose Moony's like that too. I mean, I

don't really know him in that respect, but I would imagine that he is. Anyway, let's not get into that. And then of course, you see, you've got . . . I had eight or nine months of really trying to patch it up, you know, if not for my sake or her sake, for the kid's sake . . . and for . . . you know, just . . . fxxk, you don't do that! You don't just get up and walk out because of that! You know. But it was impossible, she's sort of deaf. She's kind of . . . I did everything, you know, I wrote her letters, sent her poems, sent her flowers . . . I mean, I even got silly with it: I offered to marry her. I offered to buy her a house. You know. And then I left her alone in silence. But it was like . . . it was unfortunate really, it was like a history of tragi-comedy of errors. Because the 99% of the time that I *didn't* pick the phone up to try and communicate with her, I thought of her in glowing terms. But the 1%, or the .0001% that I picked up the phone to express that, it always developed into something like, you know, quotes from her to the effect of 'Well, you gave me so much pain, Roy!' you know, and it was like a . . . And I suppose if I'd have used my head a bit better in that situation, I'd have just walked out completely, you know . . . and when she walked out, you know, I'd have walked out with her, and maybe that would have healed the relationship in time. But I mean, I tried too hard to get it back—which is probably a fatal mistake. And . . . but no way . . . the more I offered her, the more—ironically, and naturally in a way—the more she rejected me. So that in the end I just . . . I came very close to suicide, very very close indeed. I just managed to sort of . . . stand with my toes over the edge of the precipice, and kind of look into the chasm . . . And she knew that that was going on, too, but there's no reason or pity in her heart for anything like that at all. I mean, she's very very selfish that way. And it wasn't a game on my part either, I genuinely felt very very manic. And everybody was aware of the fact that it wasn't a game, either, it had ceased to be a game a long time ago. And one or two people were in a kind of a bit of a sweat, because it was down to minute by minute—it wasn't day by day, it was minute by minute. And it could've gone either way, but you know . . . Jenner has this saying 'Harper conquers all', and unfortunately—and I say 'unfortunately' with real conviction—he did this time as well. *Again*. But then he turned his head into kind of writing the songs of the aftermath, you know, which is a great shame because there should never have been an aftermath to that relationship . . . I think . . . you know, it was a beautiful time in my life. And although I'll never see her again, I'll just hold those memories very dear. But, like, the songs that are gonna come out of that, and that have come out of it already, kind of continue over from 'Valentine' onto the next record. And there's two in particular that I can think of straight off-hand—one of them being 'Duodenum', which was the first sort of spark of consciousness that I had after the whole demise . . . and it really in its title sums up the way that I was, the way that I felt totally. And interestingly enough there was no self-pity in it, it was kind of really physically controlled . . . controlled is perhaps the wrong word, but it was a physically . . . we'll use 'controlled' for now . . . breakdown, on my part. And the title of that, that first sort of spark of consciousness after that crisis, is a song called 'Duodenum', which is exactly where I was at. It was a physical thing. I mean, I used to feel my stomach going . . . and I

knew that if it carried on for many more months I'd have a terrible ulcer in my stomach. It was physically orientated, that's what I'm getting at. And so the song was called 'Duodenum', you know . . . I used to sit there thinking 'This isn't self-pity, is it, it's got nothing to do with self-pity . . . and it's not got much to do with guilt, either. It's more real genuine tragic sadness, unhappiness.' And that song got called 'Duodenum' because that's right where it was at. And it sort of goes 'The naked flames of cracking dawn—you know, when you've been up all night, you haven't been able to sleep. And I just couldn't, you know, I wasn't able to sleep. Ever. 'The naked flames of cracking dawn come searing through with cruel scorn, to furrow wounds across each frown inside the breast of love's sad clown; who chases fleeting silhouettes with swollen dreams and rising sweats; who taunts and bluffs the savage god . . . ' You know the savage god, suicide . . . 'who taunts and bluffs the savage god, with a broken heart and a hanging head.' And then the second verse . . . 'I would we were, but I wish in vain to have you here to hold again. My blood boils ice in deep despair, and worst of all you couldn't care. Remember when the world was ours, and at our feet ten thousand stars; who saw us then, could now relate, who would have guessed this was our fate.' And . . . 'I'm sorry that you can think of us as painful and superfluous; but please don't think I'm that thick-skinned to want my seed in *any* old wind.' You know, because I used to say 'Yeah, but he's gonna need me in time, the kid,' I mean, that was one of my—if you like, stock lines, or stock mistakes. You know. 'Cos I used to think 'I didn't have my mother'. And they say that what you never had, you don't miss; but I sure did miss her. You know. And I'm thinking really honestly, down-to-earth, about the kid. And I'm just thinking, 'Yeah, he's gonna need me in time. And he's really gonna want to know who I am, because I am part of him.' And it really is down to 'But please don't think I'm that thick-skinned to want my seed in any old wind,' because she used to say 'Oh, the seed's in the wind, man, it doesn't matter *who* his father is.' You know. And I think basically, in that respect, she's totally wrong. Because I know what it is to miss one parent, and that kid's gonna . . . You know, I've given birth to the same tragedy that I came out of. And I don't like it, as a feeling, I just don't like it. So 'Please don't think I'm that thick-skinned to want my seed in *any* old wind; I can't believe we'll just exist as figments of each other's past. Where is it at, to get to this: when lawyers lurk where lovers kissed.' You know, because I started getting letters from solicitors about maintenance and all that, you know. And I *give* her money, you know. But it's like . . . you know how I operate, I operate like on a gentleman's agreement. I mean, once you've got a contract on me it's a kind of . . . it's something for me that I've got to break, I've really got to break it. Like Pete and I, for instance: Pete's been managing me for four or five years, and we've not got a contract. We don't *need* a contract either, because it works. But you know . . . 'When lawyers lurk were lovers kissed'. And then, like, the great fourth verse, which is really one of the most tragic pieces of writing that's ever come out of me, in its beauty. 'The altar of October stands with opening arms and dripping hands . . . ' You know, the leaves . . . 'unveiling storms, collecting skies, and gathering leaves to

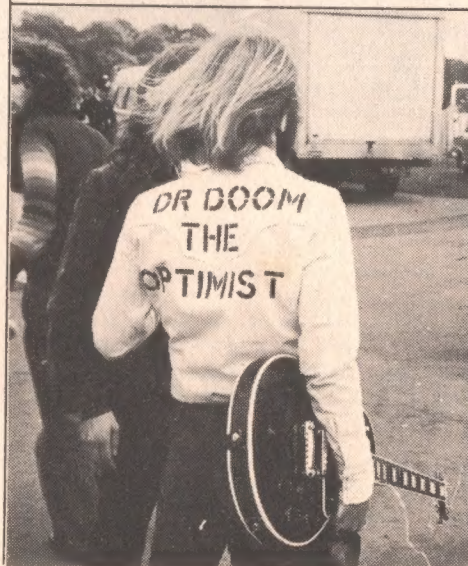


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whisper sighs. As from the pulpit summer shrinks, and hope of us together sinks, as fast as all those burning lies, and just as hard to memorise. You know. And then the kind of resignation of the last verse, which is: 'And ages pass with the flick of a thumb; love has lost and pride has won. I just can't learn to give up hope, she'll never understand the song, and I'm a fool for right or wrong. Though each night is long as tooth and nail, and fraught with hellfire's torture-trail, through old destruction flies new dawn; I'll ride the winds into the morn.' You know. And there's infinite hope in that last line. It's like the resurgence of me again. It's like I've risen from the pit. It's down to the old resiomag [?] again. And then . . . the song that immediately followed that, on its heels, is a song called 'Too Many Movies', where I actually made a conscious kind of evaluation of what had gone on. You know, and I was taking the piss out of us—her and I—in the first line of that one really, when I say, 'It seems that God's little mother is bringing his son up so right,' you know . . . but then it gets straight to the point: 'She's wearing the heart of America, where Daddy is just out of sight.' You know, in many senses, 'She's got Al Capone's ghost in his diaper, and Sitting Bull made out of was . . . 'He sure can't move any more . . . It's a rather cynical song, . . . this. 'And hard plastic dolls . . . 'hard' underlined . . . plastic dolls that cry Mama' . . . and where did *they* come from originally, one may ask . . . 'whose eyes close when laid on their backs'. You know, all very easy. And then there's the strange part of that first verse, where I kind of drifted off into one of the kind of things in recent American history that really disturbed me, which was the final execution of Caryl Chessman, which was like a stain, I think. It was like . . . due to the fact that the telegram didn't get there in time to save him, it got there ten minutes late. Which is typically, you know, American. There's many, many things that really carry me into joy about America. It's a very good place in many respects. But there's just some things about it that I just can't take. In the words of a Welshman I met last night, you know, 'I just can't cope.' And . . . yeah . . . that Caryl Chessman episode was like 'Christ!' I thought to myself . . . sorry about that word again—you know, I'll change that to 'Fxxk'. 'Fxxk! How could they have done that!' It was almost like the death of Socrates. You know, with all the Athenian senators sat round crying . . . because one of the most cherished members of their professional existences was actually kicking the bucket. You know. And in fact, all the journalists and reporters that were there witnessing the gassing of Chessman were . . . couldn't watch it—they were just so emotionally overcome because he'd sort of fought against the law for about fourteen years. You know. And, like, the telegram to let him off didn't arrive in time. And his crime was rape, right? And the gas in the lungs of Caryl Chessman is made up of Fem-fresh and gin. You see, 'cos unlike crazy mum's Billy Graham, she forced the poor guy to breathe in, you know . . . I mean, I don't think Billy Graham ever breathed in, in his life really . . . it sort of all vomited out. That's probably the worst line in the song; but it's maybe the best. Not for me to be the judge. And then the chorus: 'We've been watching too many movies . . . ' You know. What the hell has Hollywood really laid on us, in the way of unreality? 'We've been watching too many movies; laid right back,

cut and dried. With heroines in happy hereafters, where death is for failed suicide.' You know. And then the second verse: 'And the Virgin Mary's good gangster, thinking of mum as he dies. She wiped out his mind as a youngster; his soul sweeps the jail of her lies.' You know. And then I get into movie references, references to titles of movies. 'And gone with the wind'—in interted commas—and the cool hand—inverted commas—are Luke—inverted commas—and the truth about dad.' You know. Because 'Cool Hand Luke' was the epitome of that sort of mother situation, where she drove up in the Dodge truck with the other brother, to see the character called Cool Hand Luke who was played by Paul Newman . . . whilst he was in jail, you know. And he'd been a war-hero, et cetera. And his brother was with her, and his brother just didn't want to know. Did you see the film?

ZZ: I haven't seen it, no.
RH: His brother just didn't want to know, at all. And he was obviously just as fxxked up, by the whole family bit, as Newman was. But one brother managed to stay in the category which is I suppose generally revered as being straight, and the other one had veered off into the nick. And been a war-hero too, you know. And there she was, a terminal cancer job, in the back of the truck. And he had what was obviously gonna be his last conversation with her. And she was telling him about 'Oh, what a great man your old man was, what a great guy, we had such laughs,' and all that, you know. And he took it all in, but you had this kind of enquiry . . . I had an enquiry going on in my mind at the time I was watching it—I just thought, 'Yeah, but why did he leave then?' you know. 'So how did it split up then?' You know, and she just sort of says, 'Well, he walked away one day,' but . . . Cool Hand Luke never knew the truth. He never knew the truth. And in fact, he's probably . . . you know, looking on the—perhaps you might call it pessimistic side, I've now given birth . . . a male can hardly say 'given birth', and yet he can . . . to a child who is gonna go through that one. And . . . 'Gone with the wind and the cool hand are Luke and the truth about dad; while show-biz princesses lie sun-tanned, and still think John Henry is bad.' You know . . . you know who John Henry is—John Henry took his hammer. And . . . 'The father, the son, and the holy disgrace, bathe in the blood of the race. No way to treat a lady . . . ' Did you see 'No



Way To Treat A Lady'?

ZZ: No . . .
RH: Rod Steiger. Great movie. Another one, another mother-complex situation. A mother-complexed murderer. And you never see the mother in the film—she appears towards the end, in a picture. You know, 'And the father, the son, and the holy disgrace, bathe in the blood of the race. No way to treat a lady is nearer than twice Peyton Place.' You know . . . 'We've been watching too many movies, laid right back, cut and dried; with heroines in happy hereafters, where death is for failed suicide. And whatever mother said was justified.' You know, and that was like a cold, analytical, critical, sceptical, not quite cynical, view of the aftermath—which never should have been—of that relationship. I'm sure there's more to come yet. But, you know . . . I'm a romantic in that sense, you know, and I don't think she ever realised that. What she wanted me to write was, you know, a soft little lovesong about her; but she never engendered that effect, she never had that effect on me.

ZZ: It's this thing with the romantic—the traditional romantic's a blind man. Whereas the true romantic—who's never ever been called a romantic yet—is a lot more . . .
RH: Yeah, the true romantic is like . . . so extreme.

ZZ: He's the one who's been fully-stretched, because he's the only one who can really see . . .

RH: Yeah . . . no way is he anything to do with Val Doonican or Andy Williams or Des O'Connor or Tom Jones. You know. No way is he anything to do with any of that . . . I must get the letter that Mocy wrote to me, and read it word for word onto the tape. It's in the green envelope.

And I reached for this letter which was on the doormat, from another female who is—as I think I've said on the other tape—like, capable of understanding where I'm at. And she's much more than that, and she'll always be much more than that. And it says, 'Wednesday night, Marten. Dearest Roy, I am writing you this letter because I don't want you to worry about me. I love you in a hundred different ways for a hundred different reasons—every time we come together there is another, either new or reinforced; but my love for you is my responsibility, and the love that I have is for the you that I love, the person that you are, not for any ideal image I may have of you. I am trying to explain what I meant by saying that your happiness is my happiness—however trite that sounds—because I know that I am involved in that happiness, as its reflection is thrown on our relationship—because our relationship depends on us—although sometimes I think the relationship exists in spite of us! I know this is repetitive, but I'm trying to preclude ambiguities and misunderstanding, which is so easy when trying to translate feelings which aren't even thoughts into limited, misleading words on paper—finite tyranny. I could develop any one of the above phrases into a whole discussion, but I trust your intuition on safe ground to read through the surrounding haze. I wanted to say a lot to you last night—I couldn't, because I couldn't control the tears in my voice, and because of the desperate feeling of the prospect of vanished sleep—panic of the damned—which I felt for you, apart from the convulsive anguish my head was in anyway. Perhaps our dreams are on too high a



plane, and we don't really realise what we've got. Perhaps the loneliness and desperation has to be there to remind us—your strength, even on the telephone, bears my trembling on a life-giving current. I can't imagine anyone else ever being able to give me that the way you do. Tears are so close, Roy, I don't know why—I ache for that strength, I would die happily with

your arms round me. It's not just sex—I feel somehow that I have known you all my life, that I have grown up with you, and consequently you are the only one who ever really understands.' New paragraph. 'I should have remembered to remember, when I started this, the inadequacy of words. What can I say? New paragraph. 'I shall always love you—regardless of anything now—my most

precious thoughts are yours—take your freedom carefully in your hands, or are these words so many chains?' New paragraph. 'Be true to yourself and the sun will warm you.' New line. 'My love will . . . ' New line. 'Spirit of the fly-catcher,' new line, 'sand and sea—' new line, 'smell the meadowlark's song'—new line, new paragraph, 'Sometimes I long to give up the unequal struggle.' New paragraph. 'Sometimes I know peace and joy. One thing I know—our trust in each other.' New line. 'I wish I could give you what you give me—Mocy.' [Apparent break here.]

RH: That's the one . . . that's the letter of a romantically-based woman . . . to a guy who she knows is so romantically-based himself. She knows where he's at, and where to touch him at the deepest point . . . at his most . . . she's touched on all the points that she needs to, for him to hold her in a precious light—as we all must hold each other in . . . at times. But Nancy was never into that. She was never into writing those kind of letters, or in fact living that kind of life. She was a . . . she's a gold-digger, you know, and I had to face that. And I loved something in her that she wasn't capable of knowing too much about . . . I loved the human in her that she wasn't too conscious of. The uglier things in her life were much more to the front . . . You know, I mean, she could in fact reply to this article by writing to the paper. But now that I've said that, I know she won't. [wry chuckle] You know. [loud mutual laughter] Yeah.

ZZ: [most formally] End of conversation.

□ CHRIS BRIGGS

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BLABBER 'N SMOKE

First of all, apologies for that nasty, truncated piece of codswallop that went under the heading of Blabber'n'Smoke last month. What happened was that Jim, in his usual effort to try and transform the mag into the Exchange & Mart obtained another half-page ad at the very last minute, so we had to find a space for it, which meant cutting up my page. I suppose it was a good job really because the whole thing was utter bullshit... being surrounded by the synthetic luxuries of a Holiday Inn, and the charming company of people like Penny Valentine and Sue Byrom, it was hard to concentrate on writing my usually perceptive/dumb and invigorating/boring column (delete where applicable), and also I'd forgotten almost everything I was going to mention.

Anyway, not to worry. On to this month, and straight away a warm welcome to Jerry Gilbert who started work for Charisma a couple of weeks ago (we let him share the same building as us). Jerry will be in charge of 'special projects' here, and what with old Frame looming around the place as well things are looking up. Only trouble is, their new jobs are leaving them precious little time to do any writing, which is a shame I think you'll agree.

And talking of Charisma, a mention for one of their very best bands—String Driven Thing. I've seen them a couple of times over the last few weeks and they've been most impressive in all departments. Their material is powerful and imaginative, and although it's unfair maybe to single out individual members, violinist Grahame Smith (did you see him on Top Of The Pops backing Gary Shearston?) and vocalist Kimberley Beacon are outstanding performers. If their manager, the famous A.D. Munt, hadn't taken up almost permanent residence in our new luxurious coal cellar of an office I would probably never have got to see them, which just goes to show how together we are down here. We also got a sneak preview (I think that's what the trendy journalists call it) of String Driven's new album, 'Please Mind Your Head', which, believe me, is going to surprise a few people. By the time you read this, both the album and a single, 'Mrs O'Riley', should be in the shops, so if you feel like following up a recommendation, go out and have a listen.

A few people are going to be bewildered and probably annoyed at the lack of certain articles in this issue. To all those Tim Buckley freaks who are still waiting for the second part of my article started months ago, hold your breath a little longer because it will appear next issue by which time I will have had an opportunity to come to terms with his new album 'Look At The Fool'. Also next month there'll be a full account of my trip to America to see Rufus (I said that last month, didn't I?), and you'll also be able to read how Black Oak Arkansas terrified Manchester. It's all gripping stuff, so don't forget to look out for us towards the middle of December.

Just to mention America again for a minute, one of the most pleasant surprises

of the whole trip occurred in a little club in Atlanta. Playing there for five nights, two sets a night, was Little Richard in all his outrageous pomp and glory. We saw him on his first night there and he was brilliant... nearly an hour of first-class rock'n'roll, the kind of exciting full-blooded stuff that I'd thought he was past capable of a long time ago. The band he had backing him obviously helped a great deal, and whoever they were, and I'd love to know, they were superb.

Back issues dept. Please note that from now on all back issues will be handled from Soho Square, and when writing in be sure to check that the issues you require are currently available. If we have to start sending money back it could take ages, so do yourself a favour. One issue that is always in demand and was sold out a long while ago is No.24 with the first part of the Pete Townshend interview.

If any of you are still after that particular interview you can find it in 'The Road To Rock: A ZigZag Book Of Interviews' published by Charisma Books. Also contained in this, the first in a series of volumes incorporating the 'best of ZigZag', are interviews with the Pink Floyd, Family, Jimmy Page, Rod Stewart and Elton John. At the moment you can get the book, price 99p, from record shops or direct from Charisma Books themselves, and it will appear in bookshops sometime in the near future.

Attention all you Kaleidoscope fans! There is a chance that CBS may at long last release 'Side Trips' and 'Beacon From Mars' over here as a double album on the Embassy label for about £2-£3. The only problem is they need convincing of the value of such an idea, so what you'll have to do is write to Rex Oldfield at CBS Records, 28-30 Theobalds Road, London WC1, and tell him how he'll be advancing the development of Western Civilisation if he releases these two gems.

Maybe you think we should carry record reviews, who knows? We certainly intend to carry on our records page although we find it harder each month to find any really good singles to talk about. Half the trouble is that we don't get sent anywhere near all the singles that are released each week, and so somebody like John Peel's recommendations in Sounds may not even get a mention in ZigZag because we probably haven't heard the records. Peel's reviews are, I think, the most informative and interesting of any worth reading, and the same recommendation applies to his radio programmes which are still the best of any of that 'Sounds Of The Seventies' lot. I bumped into John quite recently at a gig in London, and because I'd been frantically trying to beat my way through a large crowd of people on my way to the loo, I only had a chance to say 'hello' which is astonishingly imaginative you must admit. I hope he'll forgive me if I seemed to be rather abrupt.

Now what other stars have crossed my path in the last few weeks? Well Keith

Moon was rumoured to be somewhere in the building a couple of days ago at which point everybody locked themselves in their offices. Brian Davison and Lee Jackson, both ex-Nice and Refugee, of course, pop in from time to time, and recent interviews I've done include Jesse Colin Young and Keith Christmas who has re-surfaced, after a long period of scraping a living together, to produce rather a good album on Manticore. The album features members of Kokomo who are themselves developing into a stunningly proficient band.

I reckon I must have seen more of Kokomo, the Willis and Dr Feelgood than any other bands recently, and I've enjoyed them every time. Life would be pretty bleak without them.

You may have noticed that 'Let It Rock' has risen from the grave with an issue that represents no drastic change from the previous ones, i.e. it manages to cover a wide selection of people from Gene Vincent to Steely Dan in a comprehensive analytical style. One sad note, however, their advertising manager, Mike Leadbitter, is very ill in hospital, and even though most of you probably haven't had the pleasure of meeting him, I'm sure you'll all join me in wishing him a speedy recovery.

This month's new Fanzines include a brilliant new issue of 'Who Put The Bomp' with invaluable articles on The Leaves, The Seeds, The Knickerbockers, The Standells, and The Beau Brummels. Amazing stuff.

A note from Jim. All those poll winners who have written to him requesting albums will have to wait for a while until he "gets it together". Never fear, though, he will come up with the goodies eventually.

Well I seem to have come to the end of my list of things to mention. (See, I'm not so disorganised as you think.) So I'll sign off now. Take care, see you next month, and remember, it's only rock'n'roll, but what would we do without it, eh?

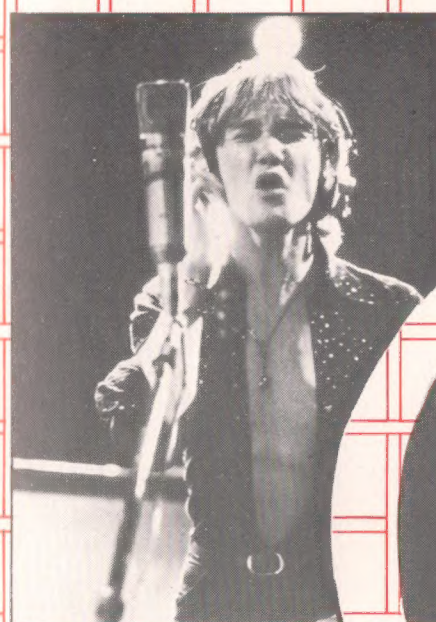


□ANDY

String Driven Thing

—Please Mind Your Head—

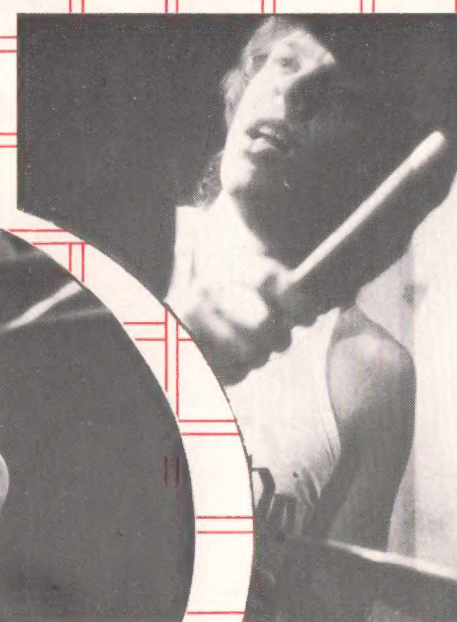
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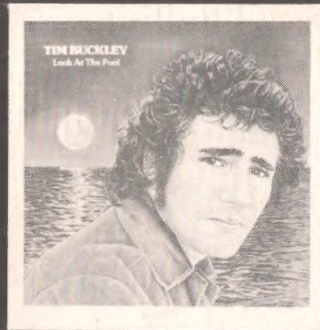
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